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Parliamentary Dimension
Bulgarian Presidency of the Council
of the European Union

Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC 21–22 January 2018, Sofia

Background Information

Session 1 - Priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU

As of 1 January 2018, Bulgaria takes over the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU for the first time. For a period of six months it will perform its role as an honest broker, a political leader, a representative and a coordinator.

The priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency are built upon the Presidency's slogan „United We Stand Strong”. It is inspired by the national slogan, which postulates that the true sustainability can only be ensured by unity. The Bulgarian Presidency believes that the main value of the European project is to inspire and not divide, to encourage its citizens to dream of peace, freedom, democracy, prosperity and justice together. Therefore, Bulgaria will focus its efforts on guaranteeing a **secure, stable** and **solidary** Europe. For this to happen the main four priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency are as follows:

The future of Europe and of the young people – economic growth and social cohesion

Economic growth and social cohesion are fundamental for the future of Europe. Although the European economy is speeding up, more jobs are being created, investment is growing and the public finances are becoming stronger, there are still some challenges the Union must cope with such as high levels of debt, low salary increases, etc. The Bulgarian Presidency finds the discussion regarding the Cohesion Policy to be crucial because it provides a real added value for the EU citizens and it is a proven example of a working instrument for reducing the differences between Member States, which guarantees the success of the European model.

European Perspective and Connectivity of the Western Balkans

The countries from the Western Balkans are an essential part of Europe; therefore, they need a clear European perspective and improved connectivity between themselves and with the EU. The Bulgarian Presidency acknowledges that the EU accession should remain an important part of the European engagement without creating unrealistic expectations, while at the same time proposing concrete steps. Delivering a tangible



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European perspective for the Western Balkans including a dialogue, based on fulfilment of the conditions and the principle of own merit, political will and decisive reforms by these countries, is key not only for the region, but for the European Union as a whole. The topic of the connectivity of the Western Balkans is of particular importance – the so-called “Connectivity Agenda” (transport, communications, energy, education, digital) with the understanding that its aim is to improve specifically the links with the EU Single Market.

Security and stability in a strong and united Europe

Security and migration policies need consensus and joint efforts. The Bulgarian Presidency will work towards better and more efficient solutions in the area of a Common European Asylum System, policies for return and readmission, as well as for a balanced approach between short and long-term measures aiming at the source of migration. We will focus on strengthening border control, exchange of information between the various bodies, and prevention. It is also very important for the Presidency to work towards an efficient, fast and fair justice system.

Digital economy and skills for the future

Keeping in mind that the technological progress is evolving at a very fast pace it is not a coincidence that the digital economy is a major element of the programme of the Trio of the Presidencies - Estonia-Bulgaria-Austria and a priority of the Bulgarian Presidency. The European Union is constantly paving the way for further technological development, concentrating its efforts on the single digital market, the access to innovations, the link between education and the requirements of the future labour market. The Presidency efforts are directly aimed at the future of Europe - the young people. Therefore, it is impossible to ignore the need for information and communication technologies through all levels of the educational system.