



**FRENCH PRESIDENCY
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

REVIEW AND OUTLOOK

1 July – 31 December 2008

A EUROPE THAT ACTS TO RESPOND TO TODAY'S CHALLENGES



**SECRÉTARIAT GÉNÉRAL
DES AFFAIRES EUROPÉENNES**

PREMIER MINISTRE

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INTRODUCTION

The six months of the French Presidency were marked by a **series of international crises which tested the European Union's capacity to collectively respond** to critical problems. The European Union was able to respond to these challenges and play a decisive role in handling these crises by acting in a united and determined fashion. From 12 August it acted decisively in Georgia to facilitate a cessation of hostilities and contribute to finding a balanced peace, which remains to be consolidated. Confronted with a global financial crisis unprecedented since the 1929 crash, it took advantage of the formidable asset represented by the euro and prevented the collapse of the banking system by pragmatically establishing a rescue plan that soon became the international reference model. In the face of the economic crisis, it quickly succeeded in defining a strategy for the 27 Member States which is a coordinated mobilisation of a single 'toolbox' using all the potential of the common European policies.

Against this very difficult background, the Presidency still **stayed the course on the priorities it had set itself at the outset**. It pursued them methodically working in partnership with the Commission and the European Parliament. In this way, the French Presidency committed Europe to the forefront of the fight against climate change on the basis of an historic agreement, strengthening its credibility ahead of future international negotiations. It set the reference framework with regard to migration policies for the years to come, notably through the pact on immigration and asylum. It obtained an agreement on the 'health check' of the common agricultural policy, which constitutes an essential milestone towards a common policy that will better respond to the challenges of public health, territorial equilibrium, rural development and the protection of the environment. Lastly, it gave a new stimulus to a European security and defence policy founded on a common analysis of new risks and a reinforcement of its operational capacities for responding effectively.

In addition, the six months of the Presidency were marked by **major advances in all the EU's areas of activity** - international, economic, financial, social and cultural. Details of this are set out in this document, which reviews the main results of the French Presidency and puts them in the context of the targets that will mark the coming months. The year 2009 should allow the work undertaken by the French Presidency to be continued as part of the trio of presidencies it constitutes along with the Czech and Swedish presidencies. These latter will, in particular, have to continue the implementation of the roadmap adopted by the Heads of State and Government for an **entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon** by the end of 2009. The European Council of December 2008 agreed, for one part, that if the Treaty of Lisbon enters into force, a decision will be taken to allow the Commission to retain a member from each Member State. It also agreed that the necessary guarantees be issued to respond to the concerns expressed by the Irish people on taxation policy, the family, social issues and the security and defence policy. Lastly, and subject to the follow-up work stipulated for these issues being satisfactorily completed by mid-2009, the Irish government committed itself to seeking the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon between now and the end of the mandate of the current Commission.

Having successfully experimented with political and institutional practices more in line with the requirements of a new world, the European Union is **well-placed to assume its global responsibilities with clarity and ambition, while defending and promoting the values that have inspired it since its inception**. United, it can better protect the interests of European citizens and make Europe's voice better heard in the world.

1.1. Finding a solution to the crisis in Georgia

The French Presidency's actions were first profoundly affected by the **conflict in Georgia** in August, which had an impact on all the European Union's relations with its eastern neighbours.

Since the start of the conflict in Georgia, the European Union played a decisive role in finding a solution to the crisis, while preserving **the unity of views of the Europeans** and affirming the European Union's ability to assert itself as a global player in conflict resolution. The rapid obtention of a ceasefire as of 12 August, the establishment of an autonomous EU civilian mission in a very short space of time, the nomination of an EUSR for the crisis in Georgia, the ambassador Pierre Morel, the launch of talks in Geneva, co-chaired by the EU, UN and the OSCE, to discuss the modalities for security and stability in the region and the situation with regard to refugees and displaced persons within the country, and an independent international enquiry on the origins and unfolding of the crisis constituted major steps on the path towards peace for the future. At the same time, the Presidency did its utmost to strengthen EU-Georgia relations. It obtained the **unanimous conclusions of the extraordinary European Council of 1 September** on Georgia and relations with Russia.

In addition to the significant financial aid awarded by the EU at the **donors' conference** (4.5 billion dollars in total, 640 million dollars of this from the Commission and 144 million dollars from the Member States), the French Presidency was also able to announce, during the EU-Georgia cooperation council of 9 December, the forthcoming launch of **visa facilitation and readmission arrangements** negotiations between the EU and Georgia and take note of the preparatory work undertaken in view of the possible establishment of a full free trade area.

1.2. Taking a rapid and coordinated response to the financial crisis

The gravity of the financial crisis, which affected all the countries of Europe from mid-September 2008 onwards, led the finance and economy ministers to establish, at their informal meeting in Nice on 12 and 13 September 2008, a first common diagnostic and fix an initial series of key messages: restoring confidence in the markets, empowering all stakeholders, reinforcing European supervision.

Confronted with the worsening financial crisis, the Presidency devoted itself to defining and promoting a **coordinated and ambitious European response** aimed at restoring the normal functioning of the financial sector. From guarantees and recapitalisation from Member States based on the modalities that were the subject of 25 authorisation decisions by the European Commission as state aid in just a couple of weeks, to the establishment of a temporary framework for state aid to give enterprises access to financing, this response also necessitated emergency measures taken at European level: raising the level of deposit guarantees for individuals (from 20 000 euros to 50 000 euros at present, and eventually to 100 000 euros), amendment of the accounting rules applicable to financial establishments to prevent these rules from forcing establishments to sell assets when their prices are at the lowest, etc.

Tested in a meeting of the G4 held on 4 October 2008, this coordinated strategy was refined in a **meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the eurozone** on 12 October, convoked on the initiative of the Presidency. This new type of meeting, unheard of since the creation of the economic and monetary union, allowed the identification, at the highest level, of the main areas of a 'concerted action plan of the eurozone countries', the principles of which were endorsed by the 27 Member States at the European Council of 15 and 16 October.

The French Presidency also organised emergency **solidarity action with the EU countries confronted with balance of payment difficulties**. In this spirit, the Council decided to award financial aid of 6.5 billion euros to Hungary in support of the International Monetary

Fund (IMF) programme and committed 3.1 billion euros of aid to Latvia. The Council also agreed on the principle of raising the current ceiling of Community financial aid from 12 to 25 billion euros.

Finally, on the strength of a common position at European level, the Presidency requested and obtained an international summit meeting, held in Washington on 15 November 2008, on the **reform of the international financial system**. Significant common principles and an ambitious work programme were adopted, notably placing the principles of responsibility and transparency at the heart of the system, ensuring appropriate surveillance and regulation of all the main players in the international financial system, giving the IMF a leading role to ensure the stability of the international financial system, and involving the emerging and developing countries in this process. This dynamic should continue with a further G20 summit scheduled to take place in London on 2 April 2009. The informal Ecofin in Paris on 18 December enabled the adoption of a European work programme ahead of this deadline, which should allow the European Union to formulate common positions and proposals for action, thereby conserving their driving role in reforming the international financial architecture. It also allowed the development of initial European guidelines on three key topics dealt with by the G20, namely the fight against uncooperative jurisdictions, the reinforcement of the IMF's resources, and the setting up of an early warning system on financial risks at international level.

In addition to these responses to an unprecedented financial crisis, the French Presidency **determinedly pursued the legislative programme** that it had set itself from the outset.

The Presidency continued work on **implementing the roadmaps in terms of stability and financial supervision** agreed on in autumn 2007. It also accelerated the procedures for renewing the legislative framework of the European financial sector and enabled the adoption of a general guideline by the Council on four key directives which should allow for a rapid adoption of these texts in codecision with the European Parliament under the Czech Presidency:

- the Capital Requirements Directive (CRD);
- the Solvency II directive, which aims to modernise the prudential rules applicable to insurance companies;
- the directive on deposit guarantees for individuals (increasing the level of guarantee and shortening the waiting time for compensation);
- the revision of the Directive on Undertakings for Collective Investment in Transferable Securities (UCITS), which will allow millions of savers to benefit from safe products at a lower cost.

Finally, the regulation on the **registration and supervision of credit ratings agencies**, another area for work identified by the Presidency in July, was presented by the Commission on 12 November and was the subject of an initial examination at the Council. Negotiations should be concluded rapidly under the Czech Presidency.

In December the Council drew up a prospective list of **measures that will be necessary in 2009** to complement the advances made under the French Presidency. The European Council called for rapid decisions on the other priorities identified, in particular credit ratings agencies, financial supervision and accounting standards.

1.3. Identifying the axes of a coordinated economy recovery in Europe

On the strength of having succeeded in a couple of weeks in setting up an unprecedented coordinated response to the financial crisis, the European Union worked from the October European Council onwards to define the axes of an economic recovery plan to prevent a recessive spiral and support economic activity and employment.

In the context of the economic slowdown, the informal meeting of the finance ministers in September in Nice affirmed the essential role of monetary policy, the need to let the automatic stabilizers work in terms of budgetary policy, the need to pursue structural reforms in parallel and to make increased use of European Investment Bank (EIB) resources to support financing for SMEs.

On the basis of these proposals and the Commission communication of 26 November 2008, at the European Council on 11 and 12 December the Heads of State and Government adopted a **European economic recovery plan**, which represents a significant effort to support the economy, equivalent in total to around 1.5% of the GDP of the European Union.

This plan constitutes a **coherent framework for the action to be taken** at EU level and for the measures decided by each Member State.

Key decisions at **European level** include:

- a 30 billion euro increase by the EIB of its interventions in 2009/2010, in particular for SMEs, renewable energy, and clean transport, notably for the automotive sector;
- the simplification of procedures and the acceleration of the implementation of programmes financed by the Cohesion Fund, the Structural Fund or the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, with a view to reinforcing investments in energy efficiency;
- the mobilisation of possibilities allowing, under the Community budget and on the basis of a list of specific projects to be presented by the Commission, increased investment in a certain number of sectors;
- the European Social Fund's rapid launch of supplementary actions to support employment, notably to benefit the most vulnerable, and the increased mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, aided by the improvement and acceleration of its procedures;
- a temporary two-year exemption beyond the *de minimis* threshold for state aid for a sum of up to 500 000 euros and the full implementation of the action plan for the European Small Business Act adopted by the Council on 1 December;
- for 2009 and 2010, accelerated procedures provided for in the directives on public procurement to reduce the length of the most frequently used call-for-tender procedures for major public works from 87 to 30 days.

To be effective, the measures undertaken **at national level** should have a rapid impact on the European economy, be limited in time, and targeted at the most affected and most important sectors in terms of the structure of the economy, such as the automobile and construction sectors. This could mean an increase in public spending, judicious tax reductions, reduced social costs, aid for certain categories of enterprises or direct aid to households, particularly the most vulnerable.

1.4. Creating a roadmap for implementing the Treaty of Lisbon

On the eve of the second half of 2008, the negative result of the Irish referendum was added to the list of institutional issues on the agenda for the French Presidency.

On the basis of the analysis presented by the Prime Minister, Brian Cowen, at the European Council of 15 and 16 October, the Presidency sought a solution that would respond both to the concerns of the Irish citizens and the attachment of the Twenty-Seven to the aim of the Treaty of Lisbon to help an enlarged EU act more effectively and democratically.

After an in-depth examination of the issue in close cooperation with the Irish government, the French Presidency proposed a **compromise solution** satisfactory for all the Member States, which was adopted by the European Council on 11 and 12 December. This agreement comprises the following elements:

- the recall of the necessity of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon by the end of 2009;
- the commitment to maintain a number of Commissioners equal to the number of Member States after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon (noting that the treaties in force provide for a reduction of the Commission in 2009);
- the commitment of the European Council to make the necessary legal guarantees to respond to the concerns expressed by the Irish on taxation policy, the family, social and ethical issues and the policy of neutrality;
- subject to the satisfactory achievement of these commitments, Ireland undertakes to seek the ratification of the Treaty before the expiry of the current Commission's mandate.

The European Council also adopted statements aimed at taking account of the delay in the treaty ratification process, notably transition measures concerning the composition of the European Parliament (increase in the number of Members of the European Parliament as soon as possible after the entry into force of the Treaty for the 12 Member States for which this number should increase).

2. A EUROPEAN RESPONSE TO THE MAIN CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Far from lessening the impact, the severe economic decline **intensified the demands linked to the priorities that the French Presidency had set itself at the outset.**

2.1. Europe leading the fight against climate change and for energy security

➤ A historic agreement on the 'energy-climate' package

In accordance with the mandate of the March 2008 European Council, the French Presidency committed itself to reaching agreement at first reading on the proposals of the 'energy-climate' package.

The European Council of 11 and 12 December thus reached a **historic agreement**. Achieved in record time - the European Commission presented its proposals on 23 January 2008 – the agreement received the **unanimous support of the Member States and an overwhelming majority of the European Parliament** in the plenary session vote on 17 December (over 550 votes out of 785).

This agreement **keeps intact the environmental requirements** of the package presented by the Commission and allows the European Union to honour the commitments made at the March 2007 European Council. It ensures the strict implementation of the unilateral commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020 compared to 1990, and by 30% if the developed countries make a comparable commitment and the emerging countries make fitting, yet precise and verifiable, commitments. The package sets out this objective precisely by sector and Member State up to 2020. It also stipulates, equally precisely, how the commitment to increase the share of energy consumption from renewable energies to 20% is to be implemented, and provides a working structure for efforts on the quality of fuels and carbon capture and storage.

This ambitious agreement defines a rigorous methodology for allocating the 'free quotas' for the **industrial sectors subject to a high risk of relocation** from 'carbon leakage'. It is designed (notably through the definition of the reference technology) to provide strong incentives for the development of much lower-carbon industries.

This agreement conveys the demands for **solidarity** between EU countries, and also with developing countries, via the financial mechanisms designed to help them develop lower carbon economies.

This agreement gives the European Union **credible instruments to dissuade certain third countries** from remaining on the sidelines of the global movement to combat climate change.

The European Union is the world's first major economy to adopt a working programme that is precise and binding in its implementation of a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. It has thus proved its capacity to collectively achieve ambitious objectives on a subject that is critical for the planet's future. It is now well-placed to retain its **driving role in finding an ambitious and comprehensive global agreement** in Copenhagen in 2009. In this respect, the Poznań conference in December 2008, which enabled agreement to be reached at international level on a precise roadmap to follow for the negotiations in 2009, marked an important first step towards such an agreement beyond 2012, which would allow the average world temperature increase in 2050 to be limited to a maximum of 2°C in relation to pre-industrial levels .

➤ **Fostering lower carbon growth**

Also contributing to the objectives of the energy-climate package, the agreement reached with the European Parliament on the proposed regulation on **CO₂ emissions from cars** and on the **fuel quality** directive.

The French Presidency also finalised an agreement with the European Parliament on the **inclusion of aviation in the Community system for trading greenhouse gas quotas** that was negotiated under the Slovenian Presidency. It also worked on the operational implementation, on 8 December 2008, of the SESAR air traffic management system, which should lead to better movement of air traffic and, consequently, to lower flying times and a positive impact on the environment. Similarly, the agreement on the technical provisions of the regulatory aspect of the proposed revision of the '**Single European Sky**' package's regulations will contribute to a better management of European airspace.

Work has also progressed on the proposed revision of the **Eurovignette directive**, aimed at taking better account of environmental impacts in pricing. In the same vein, as of 2010, the directive on clean and fuel-efficient vehicles will oblige public buyers and private operators of public transport to take energy and environmental impacts into account when purchasing vehicles. Lastly, the December Council adopted conclusions on the 'greening of transport', with a view to progressively implementing a global strategy of internalising the external costs for all modes of transport to encourage the development of sustainable mobility.

The **action plan on sustainable consumption and production** that was the subject of an agreement between Member States at the Council should lead to improved product design and labelling of products, increased use of high-performance products in terms of energy consumption and environmental impact, increased awareness by intermediaries and for stakeholders, etc. It is aimed at encouraging the development of less resource-intensive production, better environmental performance, increased industrial competitiveness, and growth in the activities of European services providers on external markets.

➤ **Strengthening our energy security**

The very high prices of raw commodities and energy at the start of the second half of 2008 raised **awareness of the need for a more integrated European energy policy**, which would contribute to combating climate change, guarantee the competitiveness of European economies and the availability of affordable energy and make the EU's energy supply more secure. In addition to the adoption of the energy-climate package, which would contribute directly to these objectives defined in March 2007, the French Presidency made a certain number of significant advances in this area.

The political agreement reached at the October Council on the **package on the internal market** in energy and gas should reinforce the European energy sector's competitiveness and increase its rapidity of response in the event of supply disruptions, notably through the action of a new European regulatory agency and enhanced coordination of national regulatory bodies. This package is due to be negotiated with the European Parliament under the Czech Presidency, with a view to an agreement at second reading.

In line with the conclusions of the European Council of 15 and 16 October 2008, which emphasised the priority area of **securing the EU's energy supply**, the French Presidency focused its work accordingly, reflected for example in the agreement reached in the Council on extending the scope of the eco-design directive, which aims to improve **energy efficiency** and should contribute to the goal of making energy savings of 20% by 2020. The measures implementing this directive concerning a wide range of products: devices with a standby mode, decoders, chargers, public and office lighting, domestic lighting. The French Presidency also prepared work to be undertaken under the Czech Presidency on the basis of

the strategic analysis proposed in November by the Commission and its European action plan on energy security and solidarity, which aims in particular at interconnecting the Baltic countries. This plan notably recommends building priority infrastructures, diversifying energy sources (liquefied natural gas, wind turbine projects in the North Sea, etc.), and revising the directive on strategic petroleum stocks, and is accompanied by measures promoting enhanced energy efficiency: revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, the directive on the labelling of energy-consuming products and the new directive on the labelling of tyres. The Council will examine this action plan rapidly ahead of the European Council of March 2009.

The **responsible and safe management of nuclear energy** is another element of the EU's energy security. The French Presidency moved forward on work aimed at structuring this development, by maintaining the necessary competencies, by the continued improvement of the level of nuclear safety in the European Union, by a safe management of radioactive waste, and by sharing this demanding safety culture at international level. It also initiated in-depth exchanges on the proposed directive on nuclear installation safety, since its adoption by the Council, by associating the president of the High Level Group on Nuclear Safety to facilitate the text's rapid adoption.

The **external aspect** of the EU's energy policy, discussed during the various international meetings under the French Presidency (EU-Russia summit, Ministerial Council of the Energy Community, etc.), should also be furthered in the coming months to develop the EU's energy relations with producer and transit countries in terms of stability of the supply and the diversification of energy sources and supply routes.

➤ ***Reducing the impact of increased energy costs***

When France assumed the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the economic environment was marked by the significant increase in energy prices, notably petrol, with severe economic and social consequences.

Faced with soaring petrol prices in the first half of 2008, the French Presidency adopted a roadmap in July that set out in detail the actions and responses to be taken. This enabled the Council to agree on the principle of **publishing weekly European commercial stocks data**.

While the reduced economic activity and energy demand in these last weeks may have led to a reduction in energy prices, the efforts made throughout the second half of 2008 to define **mechanisms aimed at reducing the impact of increased energy costs in the long term** should be pursued in the context of long term pressure on resources.

2.2. A common agricultural policy adapted to the challenges of tomorrow

➤ ***Adopting the CAP health check***

The main aim of the French Presidency was the adoption of the **CAP health check** aimed at adapting the common agricultural policy, already reformed in June 2003, to the new challenges facing the agricultural sector.

Working together with all the Member States and with the Commission's help, the Presidency was able to **achieve this objective at the Council in November** with the adoption of four texts, which mainly deal with the systems of direct aid for farmers, the common organisation of the single market concerning market regulation mechanisms (intervention, dairy quotas, etc.) and rural development. This balanced political agreement, which was welcomed by the Heads of State and Government at the European Council of 11 and 12 December, should, once formally transposed into the texts, be followed by the adoption under the Czech Presidency of the necessary implementing rules for the new provisions.

➤ ***Launching the discussion on the future of the CAP***

The French Presidency had set itself the objective of launching the discussion on the **future of the CAP beyond 2012**. Following the constructive debates of the informal meeting of the agriculture ministers in Annecy from 21 to 23 September, the Presidency adopted conclusions in November. Supported by a great majority of the Member States and the Commission, these conclusions emphasise the continuing need for the EU to have a sufficiently ambitious common agricultural policy after 2013, one which forms part of a wider vision integrating sustainable development, global food balances, competitiveness and the economic dynamism of rural areas. This discussion should continue under the Czech Presidency.

➤ ***Other results linked to the common agriculture and fisheries policies***

The Presidency also facilitated the adoption of a text enabling the completion of a Community programme to **distribute fruit and vegetables in schools**, to encourage healthy eating habits in children and combat current trends towards overweight and obesity. It should enter into force for the new school year in September 2009.

The **food aid for the most deprived persons** programme is well under way, with the public debate organised on the proposed regulation having revealed support from a majority of Member States. The opinion of the European Parliament is expected in March and it will be up to the Czech Presidency to continue working towards its adoption.

In the **fisheries** domain, the French Presidency has fulfilled the objectives it initially set. It launched reflection on the mid-term review of the common fisheries policy and on the sustainable development of aquaculture, in view of the Commission's publication of a communication on this subject in the first half of 2009.

As with every end-of-year Presidency, it adopted the TAC and quotas (total allowable catch) regulation. The French Presidency also initiated agreements on the TAC and quotas for deep sea species in the Baltic Sea and in the Black Sea as of October. Multiannual plans for cod and the West of Scotland herring were also adopted.

Finally, the French Presidency had to deal with the exceptional difficulties encountered by the fishing sector due to high fuel cost increases, which accelerated at the start of the second quarter of 2008. Thus, a week after receiving a Commission proposal, on 15 July the Council adopted a regulation instituting a temporary specific action to promote the restructuring of the fishing fleets affected by the crisis.

2.3. A just, effective and coherent policy on migration

➤ ***The adoption of the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum***

By adopting the **European Pact on Immigration and Asylum** at the European Council on 15 and 16 October, the Heads of State and Government established a common policy, transcending all divisions and guided by a spirit of solidarity between the Member States and of cooperation with third countries.

From now on, the European Union will approach migration in the light of the five commitments of the Pact: legal immigration will be organised taking account of the priorities, needs and host capacities determined by each Member State and integration will be encouraged; the fight against illegal immigration will be assured, notably by means of returning illegal foreigners to their country of origin or a transit countries; the effectiveness of border controls will be reinforced; a Europe of asylum will be built; a global partnership will be

established with the countries of origin and transit, favouring synergies between migration and development.

The priority now is to **translate these fundamental principles** into a series of measures to be implemented immediately, both at EU and at national level. From now on, the migration section of the future work programme will be part of the Pact's implementation which as of June 2010, will be the subject of an annual debate between Heads of State and Government.

➤ ***Translating the Pact into specific action***

With respect to the balance between these different strands, the French Presidency undertook to translate the Pact into **specific actions** and obtained initial results:

- in the area of **legal migration**, a political agreement was achieved on the directive on the conditions for entry and residency of highly-skilled workers. The final compromise translates Europe's desire to prevent "brain drain". Furthermore, work on the proposed directive introducing a single residency permit and a platform of rights for workers from third countries is sufficiently advanced to allow their swift conclusion under the Czech Presidency. The European Union has thus shown, for the first time, its capacity to turn its commitment to promoting labour-related immigration into results;
- with regard to **integration**, the third ministerial conference, which was held in Vichy on 3 and 4 November, was an opportunity to emphasise the need for a real public policy in this area, based on a realistic evaluation of the action taken to date. The ministerial declaration adopted on this occasion puts a particular emphasis on promoting European values, introducing a route to integration, balancing rights and duties, prioritising integration through employment and the special place that should be given to integrating women;
- as regards **illegal immigration**, a Council position on the draft directive providing for sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals was adopted at the end of December. It should allow an agreement to be reached with the European Parliament at first reading at the start of the Czech Presidency. The measures to combat illegal work set out in this text will complement a expulsion policy made more effective by the adoption of the Return Directive;
- on the subject of **external border controls**, the agreement reached with the European Parliament on the modification of common consular instructions will allow a decisive step to be taken towards the deployment of the Visa Information System (VIS). This deployment is indispensable for the widespread use of biometric visas, which is one of the Pact's objectives. It was decided to establish a 'Friends of the VIS' group to coordinate efforts. Work on the recast of the Community Code has for the most part been finalised;
- the ministerial conference organised in Paris on 8 and 9 September in the presence of representatives of civil society kicked off the new stage in **building a Europe of asylum**. The debates allowed a common vision of the future common European system founded on a greater level of protection and a renewed spirit of solidarity to emerge. This new impetus allows us to envisage a productive examination of the legislative proposals recently presented by the Commission. In Paris, it was notably decided to accelerate the creation of the European Support Office, which should be the subject of a proposal from the Commission at the start of 2009. Further proof of solidarity, following a joint mission of the Commission and the Member States in Syria and Jordan, the EU decided on 27 November to welcome up to 10 000 Iraqi refugees on a voluntary basis;
- the **partnership with the countries of origin and transit of immigrants** was at the heart of the second Euro-African conference on migration and development held in Paris on 25 November and attended by over 80 delegations, which saw the unanimous adoption of ambitious conclusions comprising 104 operational measures. The debates revealed widespread support, both from the North and the South, for selective and concerted immigration. The triannual cooperation programme approved by the ministers, which lists

all the actions likely to be undertaken in the three strands of the Global Approach to Migration, will give a clear form to the process initiated in July 2006 in Rabat. The report on its implementation will be on the agenda for a new conference being organised by Senegal in 2012. This meeting testifies, were there any need, to the unanimously acknowledged relevance and exemplary nature of this framework of cooperation between migrants' countries of origin, transit and destination.

More generally, the Presidency worked closely with the Commission to continue the implementation of the instruments of the Global Approach to Migration (particularly partnerships for mobility).

2.4. A new impetus for European defence and security

France had made the European security and defence policy a priority of its presidency. In July it submitted a **comprehensive programme** to its partners, which was adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the European Council of 11 and 12 December. It is based on a coherent approach: the shared analysis of threats and risks with the update of the European Security Strategy and, on this basis, the collective commitment to increasing our capacities to deal with this situation, the recognition of the strategic and economic need to restructure the industrial and technological basis of defence, the strengthening of partnerships with NATO and the UN, and the increased empowerment of the European Union in the face of global threats.

This programme was presented, discussed and adopted in a **context marked by the EU's strong commitment on the ground**: continuation of the EUFOR TCHAD/RCA mission, the September launch of the civilian monitoring operation in Georgia, the December launch of the EULEX civilian mission in Kosovo and the Atalanta naval operation to combat piracy off the Somali coast. Lastly, operation Althea in Bosnia fulfilled its military objectives and could be concluded shortly.

➤ A security strategy for the next decade

The European Security Strategy adopted in 2003 focuses on Europeans' common security interests. The French Presidency supported the work undertaken by the Secretary-General/High Representative to update this document to take account of intervening developments in Europe and the appearance of new global threats (proliferation, terrorism, organised crime, cyber attacks, etc.). This document allows Europeans to evaluate and assume their responsibilities with regard to security.

➤ Strengthening military crisis management capabilities, developing the instruments of the European Union

The first priority was to guide Europeans towards endowing themselves with modern, robust and interoperable military capabilities. To this end, the Council embarked on a number of major structural projects:

- **to increase projection capabilities**, it was decided to set up a European air transport fleet and to create a multinational A400M unit, the modernisation of the helicopters and training of their crews, European air and sea cooperation and the development of an air base projection capability;
- **to enhance information and European space intelligence**: agreements were signed on the launch of the MUSIS military observation satellite programme and the provision of satellite information for the European Union Satellite Centre;
- **to increase the protection of the forces and their effectiveness in operations**, agreements were signed at the European Defence Agency on the launch of a new

programme of maritime demining, conducting the future surveillance drone project and preparing for the networking of existing maritime surveillance systems;

- **to develop a European defence culture and the interoperability of European forces**, a system of young officer exchanges (military Erasmus) between Europe's main military schools will be established and better coordination of military means for operations to evacuate nationals.

In the context of the level of ambition set, notably the deployment of 60 000 troops in 60 days for a major operation, the Europeans have **decided to be effectively capable, in the coming years, of simultaneously planning and conducting:**

- two major stabilisation and reconstruction operations, with a civil component supported by 10 000 persons over 2 years;
- two rapid response operations, mainly using the EU's Battlegroups (1 500 persons);
- an emergency evacuation operation of EU nationals in 10 days;
- a surveillance / maritime interdiction operation;
- a civil-military humanitarian assistance operation;
- a dozen civilian missions, including one major mission (up to 3 000 persons)

The French Presidency also gave the **European Defence Agency** an order book and the financial resources it requires. The OCCAR (Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation) will become its executive arm. To facilitate the formation of world-class major European industrial groups which could draw on a network of reactive and innovative SMEs, three specific measures were taken: an increased effort in terms of defence R&T, the creation of a real European area for exchanging defence equipment and the reinforcement of supply chains, notably through SME-friendly measures.

At the same time, in December 2008 the French Presidency reached an **agreement at first reading on the two draft directives of the 'defence package'** on public procurement for defence and security and intra-Community transfers of defence products. These two texts will contribute to the progressive construction of a European defence equipment market (EDEM) and to the strengthening of the European defence technological and industrial basis (EDTIB), important objectives for supporting the development of the EU's military capabilities in the context of the European security and defence policy.

➤ ***Developing partnerships for security***

The strategic EU-NATO partnership was strengthened in a spirit of complementarity and mutual reinforcement in the respect of the autonomy of the EU and the Alliance's decision. EU support for UN and African Union peacekeeping was affirmed.

➤ ***Making the European Union a leader in disarmament and the fight against proliferation and terrorism***

In its 'Declaration on Strengthening International Security', the European Union affirmed its responsibilities as regards the fight against global threats (terrorism, proliferation, piracy, drug trafficking) and its commitment to disarmament. It reaffirmed its determination to fight against terrorism and to continue, in this aim and in respect of human rights, cooperation in criminal matters and will improve information sharing between European authorities, its instruments for the prevention and early detection of the phenomena of radicalisation and recruitment.

The 'Declaration on Strengthening International Security' also provides for combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, reaffirming the EU's determination with regard

to Iran, the announcement of its contribution to the creation of a fuel bank at the IAEA and enhanced operational cooperation.

It will continue supporting disarmament, notably by adopting a European nuclear disarmament plan based on the action plan proposed by the French President in Cherbourg and supporting the ban on cluster munitions, the treaty on the irresponsible arms trade, and the EU code of conduct on arms exports.

3. A EUROPE AT THE SERVICE OF CITIZENS AND ENTERPRISES

The reflection launched by the French Presidency on the future of the **Lisbon strategy beyond 2010** should also enable the presidencies to continue work in the areas identified as essential to responding to the crisis: investment in human capital, knowledge and innovation, the modernisation of labour markets and definition of active social cohesion policies, the promotion of green growth and an environment favourable to enterprise and economic activity, and the strengthening of the EU's external competitiveness through the promotion of its norms and values.

3.1. An innovative and competitive Europe

➤ The Europe of knowledge and mobility

The French Presidency has placed education, training and innovation at the heart of its action, wishing to strengthen the knowledge society in which Europe should continue to invest, thereby enhancing its added value. Fully in line with the Lisbon strategy, the Presidency launched new avenues of reflection and cooperation between the Member States in these areas for the forthcoming years. In the current economic climate, these pillars are indispensable for establishing sustainable growth, employment, competitiveness and social policy in Europe.

Promoting the mobility of students and apprentices

To encourage the **mobility of young people**, the French Presidency emphasised strengthening the European area of vocational education and training. The exchange candidate is guaranteed high-quality teaching, through the construction by 2010 of an objective and well thought-out European league table of universities with an international dimension. The French Presidency has managed to obtain an agreement from the States party to the Barcelona process, aimed at providing a genuine map for higher education in Europe, thereby enabling students to more easily plan their studies according to their own vocational project. The Council has agreed that beyond 2013, every young student – including high-school students, university students, and young people undergoing vocational training irrespective of their status – should have the possibility of taking part in a mobility scheme during their studies or training. The objective of increasing the mobility of teachers, trainers and educational teams was also adopted. In the same vein, the adoption of the Erasmus Mundus programme will see its scope broadened to include doctorate level from 1 January 2009.

The French Presidency also provided an opportunity to underline the importance of apprenticeships, a genuine sector of excellence in Europe, particularly at the first European meeting of young apprentices held on 3 October, with over 10 000 participants.

Accelerating the construction of a genuine European research area

As part of the “Ljubljana process” initiated under the Slovenian Presidency, the French Presidency wished to accelerate the construction of the **European Research Area (ERA)**.

The Member States agreed on the **joint research programming** process, aimed at better responding to major societal challenges by mobilising national research efforts in previously identified ‘common’ areas. Neurodegenerative diseases, particularly Alzheimer's disease, were considered among the first areas of implementation. The Member States also agreed on a **European partnership for international scientific and technological cooperation**.

In the long-term, the ERA should create the conditions for the **free movement of researchers** and of their work, to promote the circulation of knowledge as part of a **European Partnership for Researchers** on which Member States marked their agreement.

Significant progress has also been made on the legal framework of pan-European research infrastructures, pending the settlement of the taxation applicable to these infrastructures.

Lastly, through adopting a “vision for 2020” for the ERA, the Member States gave future presidencies the mission of continuing on this path to guarantee excellence in the European scientific sector and the competitiveness of the EU’s economy.

Developing the achievements of the Copenhagen process with regard to vocational education and training

Within the framework of the Copenhagen process, the ministers met in Bordeaux in November and adopted a communiqué which reviewed the development of new European instruments, aimed at modernising vocational education and training systems, increasing the transparency of qualifications and developing mobility.

The agreement reached on the European Credit for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) will also foster mobility, the increased recognition of informal and non-formal learning, and greater transparency and mutual trust between national education systems. Similarly, the agreement reached on a European quality assurance framework for vocational training will also contribute to increasing mobility.

Giving everyone the opportunity to pursue their educational and professional paths

The French Presidency underlined the importance of guidance, information and counselling to allow transitions between educational and professional paths.

For the first time, European educational cooperation was extended to schools and school curricula: in this area was adopted a European educational cooperation programme for schools entitled “Preparing young people for the 21st century”.

In a charter presented in October 2008 in line with EU ambitions, universities have committed to developing their specific role with regard to lifelong education and training.

Making the European Union a key actor in space

By organising a meeting of the ministers at the European space port in Kourou, the French Presidency hoped to share with its partners the vast area of economic and technological opportunities offered by space and the development of space-related innovative services.

This work led to a Council resolution in the area of space which led to reaffirming the increasing role that the EU should play in this field, while defining the axes around which European space policy should be developed, such as climate change, security, competitiveness and exploration.

The Council also recalled the priorities represented by two EU flagship programmes, Galileo and GMES (*Global Monitoring for Environment and Security*). The launching of GMES’ initial services in September 2008 demonstrated the programmes’ abilities to offer citizens new services in observation and the environment, and in natural and industrial risk management. The Council also drew up a precise road map for the European Commission’s work in 2009, concerning the governance and funding of GMES.

Towards a European innovation plan

The European Council in December furthermore called for the launch of a European innovation plan, related to the development of the European Research Area and the reflection on the future of the Lisbon strategy beyond 2010, embracing all of the conditions for sustainable development and the main technologies of the future.

➤ ***A Europe that safeguards the interests of its enterprises and consumers***

Strengthening the European economy was a major ambition of the French Presidency and became a necessity in the context of the economic and financial crisis.

The agreement reached on the European "Small Business Act" (SBA) at the Competitiveness Council of 1 and 2 December, and mentioned in the European Council's conclusions of 11 and 12 December, represents a strong political commitment in favour of the 23 million European SMEs, which have created 80% of new jobs in recent years. The SBA is accompanied by an action plan in response to the crisis, specifically in favour of SMEs. This facilitates access to financing, by inviting the EIB to play a greater role, and by cutting red tape for businesses while enabling them to fully benefit from the opportunities on European and international markets.

Responses to the crisis should also allow the European economy to begin its **transition towards a 'green economy'**, low in carbon emissions. This is why some of the recommended measures particularly target innovative enterprises such as SMEs, and the development of new low-carbon technologies, by guaranteeing their financing. On the basis of these projects, work still remains for the EU in terms of promoting low-carbon technologies, and defining common norms and standards such as eco-design or the eco-label.

Following a communication from the Commission, the French Presidency obtained an agreement on the emergence of world-class **competitive clusters**. By developing stronger cooperation at European level between competitive clusters, founded on the three-fold research-enterprise-training approach, they will be able to contend with international competition and promote the European sector of excellence.

The Member States also agreed on the importance of deploying technology and information infrastructures throughout the EU, particularly high-speed fixed and mobile internet connections. The EU must also actively embark on the design of networks of the future, particularly very high-speed internet connections, and create the conditions for their development. The Council's unanimous agreement on the **telecoms package** has paved the way for work with the Parliament under the Czech Presidency with a view to reaching an agreement at second reading. The package is set to provide better regulation of the telecommunications sector and stronger consumer protection.

With regard to the internal market, the French Presidency has sought to **remove further obstacles to trade**.

It has advanced both on the "Better Regulation" initiative, particularly on the issue of access to the law, and on the project to simplify accounting for SMEs, by reaching an agreement on the revision of two corporate law directives.

To follow up the efforts of the Slovenian Presidency in favour of **a EU-wide patent jurisdiction system and a Community patent**, the French Presidency presented a report on the status of discussions on subjects crucial to European competitiveness and innovation. In the area of **literary and artistic property**, it led to initial work in the Council aimed at prolonging the length of copyright protection for performers and directors.

Counterfeiting presents risks to health, safety, the economy, employment and creativeness. Sharing this opinion, the Member States adopted a resolution concerning **a comprehensive European anti-counterfeiting and anti-piracy plan**. This resolution provides notably for the creation of a European counterfeiting monitoring system. It also invites the European Commission and the Member States to present a customs plan for 2009-2012 and to study the effectiveness of the legal framework in guaranteeing compliance with intellectual property law.

With regard to customs, the French Presidency has continued to improve the internal market's operations by modernising **customs services**, in finalising the convention on collection costs, and by adopting the "Paris Declaration" on the future role of customs services on the 40th anniversary of European Taxation and Customs Union,.

The Council also focused on **fighting VAT fraud**. It agreed to establish an informal structure named "Eurofisc", aimed at facilitating the exchange of information on fraudulent or suspected operators of fraud. It also adopted an initial series of so-called conventional measures for fighting VAT fraud. The Czech Presidency will in turn work on a second series of conventional measures that the Commission presented in December.

The Presidency has strived to obtain a consensus on labour-intensive sectors with regard to the directive on **reduced VAT rates**, comprising a first debate at the ECOFIN informal in Nice, a second ECOFIN debate in October, and the proposal for a compromise on the directive at the November and December ECOFIN Councils. The European Council in December finally supported the possibility, for those Member States that so wish, to apply reduced VAT rates to certain sectors: the European Council has requested that the ECOFIN Council settle the issue before March 2009.

With regard to direct taxation, the Presidency began work on the revision of the directive on the **taxation of saved income** in order to enlarge the range of income and entities covered by the automatic information exchange mechanism or, provisionally, by the tax deduction at source scheme. It worked on the systematic insertion of **good tax governance** clauses in draft agreements which are currently being negotiated with third countries, notably with non-cooperative jurisdictions, and endeavoured to reinforce the anti-fraud draft agreement between the European Community and Liechtenstein.

➤ ***A Europe more protective of consumers' and citizens' interests***

Better informing and protecting consumer interests

With regard to the internal market, the French Presidency has also sought to reinforce **consumer protection**.

Supporting the Commission's proposal, the Member States concluded an ambitious agreement in favour of **limiting SMS prices and roaming mobile communications within the EU**. European companies and consumers should begin to benefit from a drop in tariffs from the summer of 2009.

The project on the **revision of the *acquis communautaire* regarding consumer protection** has moved forward, with the completion at first reading of the revision of the directive on the use of timeshare property, and the launch of work on revising the *acquis communautaire* and strengthening consumer rights. The European Commission is also working on the development of a European consumer scoreboard.

The proposals for a regulation concerning **consumer information on foodstuffs and new foods** respond to the Commission's interest to see the current regulations simplified. This involves being vigilant to ensure a balance between optimal consumer information and the need to reduce surcharges on food chain labelling. The Czech Presidency will continue to work on new foods and should focus on obtaining an agreement on the exclusion of cloning for food purposes.

The French Presidency managed to obtain the Parliament and Council's agreement on providing for a technical harmonisation of the legislative proposal relating to **the safety of toys**, in favour of greater protection of children, and secured significant advances on cosmetic products which should allow a definitive agreement to be reached in early 2009.

Lastly, the Presidency sought a common approach of the Member States on **games and betting** regulation issues.

Reinforcing transport safety

Significant advances have been made in the area of transport safety

The agreement concluded with Parliament on the “**Erika III**” package contributed to reinforcing maritime security and passenger rights, notably by transferring more responsibility to ship-owners and obliging Member States to better control their fleets.

The “**Single European Sky**” package will also contribute to reinforcing transport security, by optimising the management of European airspace, while the improvements it brings will particularly benefit air transport users. The partial guideline obtained on the enlargement of the competencies of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) will also contribute to increased security.

The progress of work on the proposal for a directive on **cross-border road sanctions** enabled Member States to reaffirm its projected target of halving the number of fatal accidents in 10 years, and to this end, their determination to strengthen cooperation at European level in fighting road offences. This latter issue however raises legal issues which still need to be resolved.

Better protecting the living environment of citizens

Beyond combating climate change, the French Presidency has placed emphasis on policies for **pollution and risk prevention**, enabling key texts to be adopted on the norms regulating emissions of heavy vehicles (Euro VI) and fuel quality. Significant progress was also made on integrated pollution prevention and control (IPPC).

In close collaboration with the Commission, the Presidency continued the **debate on genetically modified organisms** (GMOs) and adopted ambitious conclusions upon this basis. It emerged that the Member States recognise that in order to meet citizens' expectations, it is necessary to reinforce the environmental assessment of GMOs, particularly of their long-term effects. A number of avenues were opened on the EU labelling thresholds for the accidental, unavoidable presence of GMOs in conventional seeds, to take account of the socio-economic risks of genetically modified organisms and to pay special attention to sensitive and/or protected areas.

The Presidency was also responsible for **coordinating the European position ahead of international conferences**, particularly of the United Nations. Significant progress was made on two dossiers, having repercussions on discussions in coming months, namely the fight against deforestation and forest degradation, which was the subject of Council conclusions, to place the objectives in the context of climate change negotiations, and the reduction of mercury risks for human health and the environment.

3.2. A more inclusive Europe

➤ Developing policies at the service of social cohesion

The French Presidency wished to recall the common social values to which all European citizens aspire. Solidarity, particularly with the most disadvantaged, is one such requirement particularly in times of crisis. The European Council of 11 and 12 December therefore encouraged Member States to pursue their efforts to combat exclusion and the social effects of the crisis.

Renewed social agenda

The informal meeting of the social affairs ministers in July marked the launch of key dossiers in the context of the renewed social agenda presented by the European Commission. The use of the legislative tool or conferences organised by the Presidency helped reflection to thrive on subjects such as the management of restructuring and the involvement of European workers, the contribution of social services of general interest to European social cohesion,

solidarity between the generations in relation to adaptation to demographic change, the fight against new forms of poverty and combating discrimination.

Flexisecurity, employment, labour law, mobility

The Council and the European Parliament adopted the directive on **temporary work** guaranteeing the application of equal treatment of temporary workers, including wage equality, with the other employees of the enterprise, marking an important step for social Europe.

The Presidency also wished to foster the ownership and the implementation of the common “**flexisecurity**” principles by the other Member States. On the basis of principles adopted by the European Council in December 2007, the tripartite “flexisecurity” mission created in February 2008 presented its final report to the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) on 17 December 2008. The Council reiterated the decisive asset represented by involving social partners in achieving the adaptation and modernisation of the labour market, in which flexisecurity is a factor. The integrated approach promoted by flexisecurity – offering both flexibility and security – presents advantages in all areas embracing all contract types and terms, the training offer, employment policies and unemployment benefits.

This issue also naturally concerns **professional mobility** in terms of role and location. The conference on the mobility of workers in Europe on 11 and 12 September led to identifying approaches and the means to better securing phases of transition between two jobs, grades, professions or countries. Discussions on professional mobility will be deepened during the six months under the Czech Presidency which are part of its programme.

The French Presidency placed emphasis on **developing social dialogue at European level**. It notably organised a tripartite social summit in the morning of the first European Council in October, providing the opportunity to discuss the social aspect in tackling the economic crisis, as well as a conference on cross-border social dialogue on 13 and 14 November. The **revision of the directive on European Works Councils**, adopted on 17 December, should give fresh impetus to European social dialogue by ensuring that information and consultation procedures become more effective. On the same day, the Council adopted a directive transposing into Community law the International Labour Organisation’s Maritime Labour Convention to reproduce an agreement between the European social partners. This should allow the minimal rules to become applicable to the 300 000 maritime personnel working within the EU.

The revision of the 1993 **Working Time Directive** gave rise to the adoption on 15 September 2008 of a common position within the Council under the French Presidency. This position formalises the political agreement of 9 June 2008, reflecting the fine balance that the Council had managed to find after four years of tough negotiations. The Czech Presidency now has the task ahead of bringing the Council’s and European Parliament’s views closer together, the latter having decided to take up the opinion it had given at first reading at the plenary session of 17 December.

Finally, the French Presidency managed to obtain a political agreement on the rules fixing the implementing modalities of the regulation on the **coordination of social protection systems**. This agreement, which was then formalised into a common position and the terms of which have largely already been settled with the European Parliament, is the result of over three years of work on very sensitive texts.

The fight against poverty

The French Presidency has fostered the exchange of experiences on the fight against poverty, the formulation of common **active inclusion** policies and the development of concrete proposals, as the Member States have been invited to reflect on quantifiable national objectives for poverty reduction.

The first meeting of the European ministers responsible for combating poverty was organised on 16 October 2008 and the opportunity given to develop **experimentation** and innovation as tools for modernising social policies, particularly at the meetings of social experimentation in Europe on 21 and 22 November .

Lastly, the Member States called for the organisation of a consensus conference on the **homeless and “poor housing”**, which could be held in 2010, the ‘European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion’.

The fight against discrimination

Prolonging the European Year for Equal Opportunities in 2007, the French Presidency organised a second equality summit on 28 and 29 September. The Presidency’s work has given renewed impetus to the reflection on the **fight against discrimination**. The proposal for a directive on the equal treatment of people without distinction of religion or convictions, handicap, age or sexual orientation was the subject of an in-depth examination at the Council. These discussions must be continued and used to feed debates at the third equality summit in 2009 under the Swedish Presidency.

The French Presidency has committed to following up the European Council of June 2008 concerning **Rom inclusion**. At its initiative, the Council in the conclusions adopted on 8 December, fixed guidelines for improving the living conditions of the Rom population in Europe through a series of specific targets, the exchange of experiences and best practices between Member States and cooperation between the actors concerned within an “integrated European platform”.

Equality between women and men

The French Presidency has consistently worked towards promoting equality between women and men, particularly by launching discussions on new draft directives aimed at giving impetus to the **conciliation of professional and family life**. The Council also adopted conclusions in this area. To this end, the Presidency held a conference and a meeting of the equality ministers on 13 and 14 November, which facilitated reflection on the means to achieving genuine equality, notably by fixing targets for reducing wage gaps at European level.

Health

The French Presidency achieved significant advances in this area by highlighting several subjects of importance, and paving the way for new projects.

The **fight against Alzheimer’s disease** was the subject of a conference on 30 and 31 October, at which the President of the Republic underlined the role the EU should play in this area. The conclusions of the EPSCO Council of 16 and 17 December therefore invited the Commission to adopt an initiative in 2009 to fight this disease, while the research ministers launched a joint programming of the national research operators in September.

In terms of reinforcing health safety, which has become a necessity in Europe, the health ministers agreed to work on the challenges and modalities of better **European coordination in the event of a public health crisis**, on which the Council drew conclusions. This concerted effort, which was furthered under the French Presidency, is a condition for the effectiveness of the actions to be implemented.

The French Presidency was able to share its determination to continue working in favour of a Europe of patients, notably by a **coordinated approach to rare diseases**. The Commission's proposal of a recommendation which appeared on 11 November should allow concerted work between the Member States to be carried out on the question in the future.

Discussions surrounding the directive on **patients' rights** with regard to cross-border health care enabled the French Presidency to present an initial compromise warmly welcomed by its partners. Considering the text as a good working basis, the Member States should continue to advance simultaneously on the European Parliament's work. Lastly, negotiations on the directive approving the amendments of the terms for the market regulation of medicines, initiated under the Slovenian Presidency, were positively concluded under the French Presidency at first reading.

To further improve the level of **health safety of the food chain** in Europe, the French Presidency gave the necessary impetus for advancing several priority dossiers in the areas of food health safety, animal safety and the protection of plants. The **pesticide package** in particular was the subject of an agreement at second reading, and should be confirmed by a vote in European Parliament at the start of the Czech Presidency. Other subjects have also advanced, be it on the revision of the Regulation on Maximum Veterinary Medicinal Residue Limits in foodstuffs or the market regulation of animal food labelling on which an agreement has been reached, the revision of regulations on animal by-products not destined for human consumption, the use of antimicrobial substances to eliminate contamination from the surface of poultry carcasses, or the reassessment of the *acquis communautaire* in the area of plant protection. Lastly, Council conclusions were adopted on the health safety of agricultural and agri-food imports.

Services of general economic and social interest

At the forum held on 29 and 30 October, the French Presidency shared its visions with its partners on the specific nature of social services of general interest (SSGIs), and their role in maintaining social cohesion between European citizens. The next forum will be held under the Belgian Presidency in 2010.

The Presidency worked with the Member States to identify the specific problems encountered by SSGIs and also transmitted a roadmap to the Commission taking account of the expectations of the Member States on SSGIs.

➤ A renewed ambition for the cohesion policy

In close collaboration with the local communities, the French Presidency has continued to lead reflection on major projects regarding the **future of the cohesion policy and the concept of territorial cohesion**. The Member States exchanged views on the implementation of the Leipzig Charter by announcing the collective construction of a "reference framework" for sustainable and inclusive cities, on which discussions will end in the first half of 2010. The local actors of towns, including local elected officials, also made commitments in favour of this "reference framework" at the Cities Forum organised by the French Presidency.

The meeting of the urban development and cohesion policy ministers at the end of November allowed them to recall the role that economic and social policy should play in **fighting against the economic crisis**. An agreement was therefore reached by the Council in less than a month on the Commission's range of proposals to accelerate and make the implementation of these funds more flexible, to contribute to economic recovery.

Lastly, the French Presidency continued work towards developing a renewed European strategy vis-à-vis the seven **outermost regions** based on the Commission's interim communication at the end of October *The outermost regions: an asset for Europe*. It also

continued to study the overseas departments and territories with a view to forming a new association with the EU by using the results of the public consultation launched in July on the basis of the Green Paper, which tackles the future of EU's relations with the overseas departments and territories.

➤ ***Developing an integrated maritime policy***

In accordance with the European Council's conclusions of December 2007, the French Presidency concentrated on moving work forward on the definition and implementation of the EU's **integrated maritime policy**. This should allow the EU in forthcoming years to increase consistency between the various sectoral actions it leads in the maritime area:

To this end, the French Presidency brought together the high-level group of Member State representatives, which adopted conclusions in the Council highlighting the issues linked to governance and surveillance. These advances lay the foundations of greater cooperation in the maritime area.

The Council also adopted a resolution which defines the operating rules of the European Long-Range Identification and Tracking Centre (LRIT) of vessels. Lastly, the Member States clearly indicated their wish to join forces in marine and maritime research, following up on a Commission communication of 3 September 2008.

3.3. A more attentive Europe to the rights, security and aspirations of citizens

➤ ***An area of freedom, security and justice***

Under the **French Presidency**, there have been new advances in developing the **common area of freedom, security and justice** which have involved laying the basis of a European common immigration and asylum policy, concluding several important legislative initiatives, and ensuring the promotion of specific instruments designed to foster and increase the effectiveness of cooperation between the Member States. The European Union has thus proved itself capable of providing citizens with the protection they expect from the EU, while fully respecting fundamental rights and individual freedoms.

These results allow the EU to envisage **the next step in the construction of our common area based on solid foundations**. The development of a new 5-year work programme which will succeed the Hague Programme from 2010 constitutes a key axis of work for the Trio Presidency. With the finalisation of the work of the future group of interior and immigration ministers, as well as the adoption of the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum and the decision to apply the **principle of convergence** to operational cooperation between repressive authorities, several decisive milestones have been laid under the French Presidency.

In terms of method, the Presidency remained vigilant in **associating the European Parliament** beyond the requirements laid out in the current institutional framework. This dialogue has proved particularly productive and promising for the future. The Presidency has also endeavoured to foster the emergence of **a more coherent approach to relations with third countries** in the area of justice and interior affairs.

➤ ***A safer Europe for its citizens***

The French Presidency has employed a **pragmatic method**, bringing together existing mechanisms and identifying future approaches to improve and promote concrete projects enabling it to enhance the effectiveness of fighting insecurity in all its forms. It has particularly sought to innovate by concentrating on the operational dimension of cooperation between the police services of Member States through using European instruments.

The attacks in Mumbai tragically recalled the permanence of the **terrorist threat**. The European Union should now employ new tools to detect the risks as early as possible, anticipate terrorist acts and deepen cooperation with third countries. The French Presidency contributed to this area by renewing the strategy and plan of action against radicalisation and recruitment in prisons by developing a best practices guide targeting prison personnel, setting up a mechanism to detect suspected terrorists when they apply for a visas, **preventing the CBRN threat** (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear), implementing a European database at Europol and maintaining close dialogue with strategic partners of the EU, including the United States and Russia.

In terms of **fighting criminality**, the French Presidency was guided by its determination to harmonise practices, modernise techniques and combat the major forms of trafficking:

- in this spirit, a guide devoted to **police and customs cooperation centres** was developed to foster the creation of these mechanisms by Member States, which proved to be extremely effective in the arrest of traffickers and authors of “hold-ups”. European commissariats were also put in place in touristic areas or in areas staging important events;
- to discourage major delinquent organisations from using new technologies, the **fight against cybercriminality** constituted a key working axis for the French Presidency. A concerted plan of action between the Member States and the Commission was agreed and the decision taken to create at Europol a **European platform for reporting illicit internet content** based on national programme, to which all of our partners have committed to establishing. In an aim to overhaul identification techniques, a project has been launched to prevent criminals from using anonymity by making telephone calls with mobile phone cards acquired in other Member States;
- regarding the **fight against major trafficking forms**, the Anti-Drug Coordination Centre for the Mediterranean (CECLAD-M) was created in Toulon to respond to the displacement of drug circuits from the Atlantic towards West Africa. This specific measure will contribute to the implementation of a new anti-drug action plan, adopted by the Council for the 2009-2012 period. In order to assist West Africa, the French Presidency has also launched a scheme to draw up a census of all previous actions and identify cooperation projects with an operational vocation, with concrete conclusions expected in 2009. In terms of arms trafficking, the meeting of the EU-Western Balkans Forum provided the opportunity to define an action plan which notably comprises the participation of police services in Western Balkan countries in joint operations with the EU. The Council also adopted conclusions which will enhance the effectiveness of the fight against the trafficking of stolen cultural property;
- for the first time the issue of **fighting road insecurity** was dealt with within the scope of justice and interior affairs.

Lastly, the French Presidency ensured the development of **instruments which are indispensable for the security of the common area of free movement**. The legal basis which allowed the development of the Schengen Information System (SIS II) to be pursued beyond 31 December 2008 was also renewed. An agreement was reached with the European Parliament on **biometric passports**, while the completion of the Schengen evaluation of Switzerland led to land border controls being lifted on 12 December last with a one of the EU's extremely close partners.

➤ ***A Europe of Justice committed to strengthening the protection of people, facilitating the daily life of citizens and increasing mutual trust***

Through political mobilisation and the help of its partners, the French Presidency adopted several framework-decisions essential to the construction of a common area of freedom, security and justice, the protection of data as part of police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, in fighting terrorism, racism and xenophobia and completing the European

mandate on obtaining proof. These texts are a decisive addition to the implementation of the Hague Programme.

The Presidency also managed to bring to fruition a series of initiatives which increase the EU and its Member States' capabilities in better protecting EU citizens:

- the decisions adopted by **Eurojust** and the **European judicial network in criminal matters** will help make these instruments more effective, through establishing clearer links to their respective competencies. Eurojust will see its ability for action and its missions to coordinate investigations reinforced, and will be able to better manage the increasing flow of information, while benefitting from the harmonisation of its powers and statuses of its national members. Moreover, the decision reached on the interconnection of records paves the way for the automatic exchange of information on the background of sentenced persons between Member States, and provides a European response as part of the fight against recidivism. Lastly, agreement was reached on the mutual recognition of judicial control enabling the decisions taken by Member States to take effect throughout the EU. This text marks the completion of the aims that the EU had set itself regarding mutual recognition, while calling for further study on deepening this mechanism in the future;
- the protection of individuals is fully reflected in the **reinforcement of the safety of the most vulnerable**, notably children. Through lessons learned in two exercises, the French Presidency obtained a commitment from all its partners to set up their own "abduction alert" programmes of which the effectiveness has been proven, and to guarantee the compatibility of national tools enabling the rapid identification and arrest of child abductors, including across borders.

EU citizens, particularly those who exercise their right to free movement, expect European justice to **facilitate their daily and family life**. In this spirit, the French Presidency did its utmost to reach a political agreement on the regulation on maintenance obligations. This led to a decision, notably for the 170 000 couples of different nationalities in Europe that divorce each year, to simplify and accelerate the recovery of alimony, be it for adults or children.

Regarding **dependent persons**, ratification by France of the Hague Convention of 13 January 2000 will allow the Convention to enter into force. The Presidency has already managed to encourage several Member States to unite with it in a movement which should continue with a view to offering better protection from one State to another for handicapped children, wards and the elderly.

Advances have been made regarding the **mutual trust between judges and justice personnel**, and their knowledge of EU instruments and judicial systems in other Member States. The implementation of several decisions under the French Presidency should contribute to: a resolution on the training of judges by inviting Member States to establish the basis of a common judicial culture; opening up a civil and commercial judicial network to all personnel of the law; creating a legislative cooperation network between ministries of justice, etc. The adoption of an action plan on online European justice ("European e-justice") should lead to rapid progress on this key project aimed at facilitating the administration of justice, by using new technologies, bettering structuring the work underway and entrusting the European Commission with an operator role in association with the Council.

This progress presents an opportune moment to relaunch the construction of the European judicial area, on the eve of the new multiannual work programme.

➤ ***A Europe that respects fundamental rights and stands together when disasters occur***

In accordance with European values, the French Presidency endeavoured to achieve a balance between the construction of the common area of security and respect for fundamental rights and individual freedoms. The adoption of **the Data Protection Framework Decision** under the third pillar is a major step forward in this regard.

In the same spirit, the work done on the project for **the use of data on airline passengers for the prevention of serious crime and terrorism** (European PNR) has been redirected from an examination of the initial proposal from the European Commission towards fundamental debate on the main parameters of such a system and on the requirements flowing from it in terms of data protection. Consultation of all stakeholders, including the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency for the first time in a matter of this kind, made it possible to identify a European model for PNR. The report endorsed by the Council provides the Czech Presidency with a solid basis for the drafting of a legal text on which a decision can be taken in the near future and for the continuation of an essential dialogue with the European Parliament.

Where **data protection** is concerned, the Presidency has negotiated a policy declaration with the United States reaffirming the goal of a legally binding international agreement as the best way in which to expand information exchanges between law enforcement authorities on either side of the Atlantic. With this in mind, the need now is to prepare for this negotiation by examining in greater depth outstanding issues such as the importance for the European side of obtaining a right of correction for data concerning Europeans in the United States comparable with that enjoyed by Americans in Europe.

With regard to the **European Union's disaster response**, the French Presidency has obtained a series of decisions that will lead to a strengthening of solidarity between Member States, the effectiveness of coordination of national resources and the preparation of all those involved by means of common training courses conducted within the framework of a network of schools and institutes charged with civil protection and humanitarian action. In particular, the Council approved the concept of **European mutual assistance**, the aim of which is to improve coverage of the various categories of risk through rapid provision by Member States, on a voluntary basis, of modules that are identified in advance, interoperable and can be mobilised in an emergency, within the framework of a Community civil protection mechanism. A decision has also been taken to bring the European Union still closer to the United Nations. All these initiatives will be followed up on the basis of a roadmap endorsed by the Council and laying down, for a majority of domains, precise goals and a timetable for their achievement.

3.4. A Europe of culture, youth and sport

➤ ***Commitment to culture***

In the cultural field, the French Presidency succeeded in achieving two concrete outcomes, thus making available to citizens new means for access to the rich wealth and diversity of the European cultural heritage.

The launch of **Europe's digital library**, Europeana, thus represents a substantial breakthrough in the use of the new technologies to add value to European culture. Europeana already provides access to two million works, rising to six million by 2010. The projected **European heritage label**, by highlighting flagship sites for European history and memory, will also add value to Europe's heritage and open it up more effectively to Europeans. The Council has defined the content of this initiative and has asked the

Commission to put forward to it as early as possible a project for Community action directed at its implementation. The Council has also underscored the necessity for greater consideration to be given to **architecture**.

At the close of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, the French Presidency sought to promote **intercultural dialogue along with cultural and linguistic diversity** by means of numerous conferences and the organisation of a European Cultural Season. In this same spirit, the Council adopted conclusions aimed at strengthening the role of culture in relations between the European Union and its Member States and third countries.

The French Presidency also helped to make the European Union **a major player in the digital revolution**. Its efforts allowed a consensus to be achieved on the search for solutions between all actors in the sector in order to combat piracy and foster development of the legal online offering. The new “**Safer Internet**” programme agreed between the Council and the European Parliament will take effect on 1 January 2009 to provide better protection for children when using the Internet.

It has also taken forward Community reflection on the importance of **the economy of culture**, in particular at the “Culture, A Growth Factor” Forum in Avignon.

➤ ***Commitment to youth***

The **health and welfare of young people** has been made a particular subject of attention by the French Presidency in a resolution recommending cross-sectoral, specific inclusion of youth in public health policies and of health in policies directed at young people. It particularly emphasises the need for young people to take responsibility for their health.

The adoption of the first recommendation in the youth domain, on the subject of **the mobility of young volunteers** in Europe, will permit the possibilities to be developed for young volunteers to carry out such activities in other Member States through the creation of networks, synergy and exchanges between European bodies organising voluntary work.

This work has enabled the French Presidency to pursue the implementation of the European Youth Pact, for which numerous avenues remain to be explored.

The Presidency also set out to highlight the youth dimension of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

➤ ***Commitment to sport***

Several essential subjects for the world of sport were addressed during this half-year, such as the question of **combined training and education** and the **composition of the teams of professional clubs**. They were the subject of a declaration by the European Council on 11-12 December 2008.

The Ministers of Sport invited the European institutions to strengthen the dialogue with the international and European Olympic and sports movement. They also asked the Commission to establish clearer legal orientations for the application of Community law to sport, taking due account of the specific features of this sector. The Presidency thus initiated an approach based on exchanges of views and concerted action with a view to the possible entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.

4. A EUROPE THAT IS STRONGER ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

4.1. Promotion of ground rules for trade based on openness and reciprocity

➤ *Ensuring access to third-country markets for European business*

The French Presidency of the European Union returned on more than one occasion to the idea of **reciprocity** to enable the position of the European Union to be more effectively affirmed in the various trade negotiation forums, to forestall any perception of Europe as a weak link ill-prepared to defend its commercial interests.

Due to the mobilisation efforts of the French Presidency, the issues specific to **market access** are now the subject of more systematic attention. An overall assessment of the implementation of the European Commission and Member States' common strategy was carried out, in particular at a symposium held on 27 November. A number of achievements were made (strengthening common tools and information sharing, an annual report evaluating the position with regard to access to the main markets of the European Union and identification of barriers of priority importance at Community level). The Council thus adopted conclusions on 8 December that make absolutely clear the possible use by the Commission of every instrument available to it, from discussion to retaliatory action, where the latter comes to be the only possible option.

To conclude, the Presidency has endeavoured in several bilateral negotiations to ensure the greater **openness of the public procurement sector** outside the European Union.

➤ *Promoting fair international competition*

The French Presidency has engaged with determination in the promotion of the protection of intellectual property rights and the fight against counterfeiting, which constitutes one of the pillars of the external dimension of European competitiveness, as well as a fundamental factor in adding value to research, innovation and the creation of European enterprises, especially SMEs. The Competitiveness Council adopted a resolution on 25 September 2008 on a **comprehensive European anti-counterfeiting and anti-piracy plan**.

The European plan provides for a cross-sectoral approach to combat counterfeiting and piracy more effectively, encouraging improved cooperation between stakeholders to counter the phenomenon. It provides for the creation of a European counterfeiting and piracy observatory, the setting up of a network for the swift exchange of information and better coordination between the institutions involved in combating counterfeiting, and encourages partnerships between the public and private sectors and collaboration between professionals, providing also for a strengthening of protection for intellectual property rights at international level, notably through active participation in the work on a plurilateral anti-counterfeiting trade agreement (ACTA).

The French Presidency has also played an active role in the preparation of the second and third negotiating sessions on the ACTA project which took place respectively in Washington (29-31 July) and Tokyo (8-10 October). These two sessions addressed issues relating to measures in civil, criminal and customs law. The French Presidency arranged a fourth negotiating session in Paris (15-18 December), and, in addition to enabling the discussion on criminal law measures to be taken further and considered in more detail, opened up the whole range of chapters that had not been addressed hitherto: institutional measures, international cooperation and the Internet.

Lastly, the French Presidency has kept up its efforts to obtain substantive consideration of geographical indications in the Doha Round.

➤ ***Continuing bilateral negotiation efforts and exploring the strengthening of multilateral trade relations***

The question of the **Doha Round**, with a view to an ambitious, balanced and comprehensive agreement, continued to be a priority matter for the French Presidency, in line with the declaration adopted by the Heads of State or Government at the G-20 Summit on 15 November. The latter called for a completion of the important modalities phase by the end of the year. A shared determination not to yield to protectionist temptations was clearly expressed and a commitment was given to refrain from erecting new barriers to trade or investment for a period of twelve months.

In parallel with the work done towards a conclusion of the Doha Round, the French Presidency supported every effort made by the European Commission to take forward the free trade negotiations in progress.

In addition, the Presidency initiated reflection on the strengthening of trade relations between the European Union and the industrialised countries.

4.2. Enlargement and neighbourhood: working for the creation of an area of stability and prosperity

➤ ***Croatia and Turkey***

On 8 December, the Council adopted **conclusions on enlargement**, on the basis of the progress reports submitted by the Commission early in November. In accordance with the undertakings given by the French Presidency, those conclusions are fully in harmony with the framework defined in the “**renewed consensus on enlargement**” approved by the European Council in December 2006 and the Council conclusions of December 2007. The Council has urged Turkey to return to the path of reform and called upon Croatia to step up its efforts, notably on the issues linked to the rule of law and cooperation with the ICTY.

The French Presidency has also made significant progress in negotiations with Turkey and Croatia:

- In the case of **Turkey**, two new negotiating chapters were opened at the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) on 19 December, which brings the chapters now open to ten in all (of which one has been closed provisionally). The Presidency has also maintained continuous political dialogue with Turkey, particularly on regional matters (Southern Caucasus, Near and Middle East).
- Accession negotiations with **Croatia** have entered a crucial phase. The three IGCs conducted with Croatia on 25 July, 30 October and 19 December permitted two chapters to be opened and six to be provisionally closed. This brings the number of chapters open to a total of 22 and to seven the number of chapters closed provisionally.

The opening and closing of chapters of the *acquis communautaire* remain linked to satisfaction of reference criteria by the candidate country and unanimous agreement from the Member States, towards which it will be notably the responsibility of the Czech and Swedish Presidencies to work.

➤ ***The Western Balkans***

The deployment of the **EULEX** civilian mission throughout Kosovo was a priority for the French Presidency. On 9 December, the “initial operational capacity” of EULEX was declared and implemented on the ground by an international staff of some 1,600 (including 190 French personnel).

The French Presidency contributed to the deepening of the stabilisation and association process as a whole and to the consolidation of closer European ties with the region's countries within the framework defined by the Thessalonica Agenda and the renewed consensus on enlargement strategy agreed at the meeting of the European Council in December 2006.

On the basis of progress reports submitted by the Commission early in November, the Council reaffirmed in December 2008 its support for the **European perspective for the Balkans** and underscored the fact that potential candidates should obtain candidate status, depending on their respective merits, by implementing economic and political reforms and meeting the necessary conditions and requirements.

The Presidency pursued the work on the Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAAs), notably in order to ensure the entry into force of the interim agreement with Bosnia. The French Presidency also gave its full support to the efforts made by the countries of the Western Balkans with regard to **visa regime liberalisation**. It also assured itself of the evaluation of the implementation of the roadmaps defining the criteria to be met on the basis of an initial assessment by the Commission of the progress achieved by the States concerned. The **Balkans Forum of JHA Ministers** on reforms in the field of justice, freedom and security, held on 6-7 November in Zagreb, allowed in-depth dialogue to be maintained not only on visas but also on cooperation between police and judicial authorities and the fight against organised crime and terrorism. If the conditions are met, a proposal from the Commission on the completion of visa liberalisation could be put forward in 2009 for certain of the countries involved, such as FYROM.

The Presidency also noted the decision taken by the Prime Minister of **Montenegro** on 15 December to seek his country's accession to the European Union. It will be the responsibility of the next Presidency of the Council to decide upon the approach to be adopted in considering this application.

➤ ***Mediterranean***

The **summit launching the Union for the Mediterranean (held in Paris on 13 July 2008)** which brought together 43 partner countries, under the co-presidency of the President of the French Republic and the Arab Republic of Egypt, Mr Hosni Mubarak, gave political impetus at the highest level in favour of a more balanced partnership. This led, for the first time in the history of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, to the introduction of the principle of a co-presidency between the EU and a Mediterranean partner country and the extension of the partnership to four new countries (Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Monaco).

The declaration adopted at the summit provides for the definition and implementation of projects to take up common challenges in six areas: the de-pollution of the Mediterranean; motorways of the sea and land motorways; civil protection; substitution energy; Mediterranean solar plan; higher education and research, a Euro-Mediterranean university; the Mediterranean initiative for business development.

Less than four months after the Paris Summit, the **ministerial conference** which was held in **Marseilles on 3 and 4 November** led to the adoption by consensus of a declaration which decided to establish the secretariat's headquarters in Barcelona, and specified the modalities of governance of the Union of the Mediterranean. The Union's Secretary General will come from one of the countries of the South and will be assisted by several deputy general secretaries, including an Israeli and a Palestinian. The foreign affairs ministers of the Union for the Mediterranean also unanimously reached agreement at the conference in Marseilles on the participation of the League of Arab States in all meetings at all levels.

The French Presidency also organised **six sector ministerial meetings** of the Union for the Mediterranean (trade, foreign affairs, industry, employment, health and water), thus opening the way to the implementation of numerous concrete projects.

At the **bilateral level**, the work done at the instigation of the French Presidency has enabled definition of the broad lines of the “**advanced status**” of **Morocco**, of guidelines for **the strengthening of relations with Israel**, thus preparing the way for a new action plan, and initial consideration of Egypt's requests for closer relations with the Union. The European Union also held a first Association Council meeting with Algeria, which expressed in this context its wish to implement fully the Association Agreement signed in 2005, initialled such an agreement with Syria, launched negotiations with Libya with a view to a framework agreement and deepened relations with the **Palestinian Authority**. In addition, Tunisia and Jordan expressed strong interest in a reinforced partnership with the European Union.

The Council also adopted on 8 December conclusions on the **Middle East Peace Process** in which the European Union reiterated its support for the Israeli-Palestinian negotiating process under way since the Annapolis Conference, its desire to see significant change in the situation on the ground and its attachment to the resolution of all aspects of the Israeli-Arab conflict, in accordance with the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference.

Finally, at an informal meeting organised as a matter of urgency by the Presidency on 30 December in Paris to discuss the situation in the Middle-East following the dramatic events in Israel and Gaza, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, the High Representative for CSFP and the European Commission called for an **immediate and permanent ceasefire, an emergency humanitarian effort and the stepping up of the peace process**.

➤ ***Eastern dimension***

With regard to the Eastern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), Presidency action was profoundly affected by **the conflict in Georgia** in August, which had a comprehensive impact on relations between the European Union and its neighbours to the East.

From the very beginning of the conflict in Georgia, the French Presidency played a decisive role in finding a solution to the crisis, while at the same time preserving **a unified European view** and affirming the capacity of the European Union to assert itself as a global actor in conflict resolution. The rapid obtaining of a ceasefire, the implementation, within a very short timeframe, of an autonomous civilian mission from the European Union, the appointment of a EUSR for the crisis in Georgia, Ambassador Pierre Morel, the launch of the Geneva discussions, co-chaired by the EU, UN and the OSCE, which notably allowed arrangements for security and stability in the region, and the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons to be addressed, along with an independent international enquiry into the origins and unfolding of the conflict, all these were major steps forward for the **preparation of peace in the future**. At the same time, the Presidency devoted its best efforts to **strengthening relations between the EU and Georgia**. In addition to the major financial effort made by the EU at the donors' conference (4.5 billion dollars in total, including 640 million dollars from the Commission and 144 million dollars from Member States), the French Presidency was also able to announce, at the EU-Georgia Cooperation Council meeting on 9 December, the forthcoming launch of negotiations with Georgia on visa facilitation and readmission, and to take due note of the commencement of preparatory work with a view to the possible creation of a deeper, comprehensive free trade area.

The **EU-Armenia** and **EU-Azerbaijan** Cooperation Council meetings (9 December) also permitted the impact of the Georgia crisis in the Southern Caucasus to be evaluated and a call for the strengthening of relations with the EU, at such time as implementation of the neighbourhood action plans is extended.

Closer engagement of the EU in the region has also contributed to major developments in **bilateral relations** with each of these countries, and especially with **Ukraine**: the summit held in Paris on 9 September was thus an event of great importance, offering most notably the prospect of concluding an **Association Agreement**, if possible by the end of 2009, which leaves open the possibility of subsequent developments in the relationship between the EU and Ukraine. In the case of **Moldova**, the prospect was opened up of negotiations in the near future for a new and ambitious agreement with that country. With regard to **Belarus**, following the freeing of all political prisoners and parliamentary elections on 28 September, the Council meeting on 13 October resolved to lift sanctions in part and expressed earnest hopes for a gradual re-engagement with Minsk, thus opening up the way to the application of the measures for which the European Neighbourhood Policy provides.

In this connection, the European Council meeting of 11-12 December asked the Council to look at the proposals put forward by the Commission in its communication of 3 December 2008 on the **Eastern Partnership** and to report back to it at its session in March 2009 with a view to approval of this initiative by the EU and its launch at a **summit with the partner countries** to be held by the forthcoming Czech Presidency in the **spring** of 2009.

This strong engagement in Georgia and the considerable efforts to strengthen relations between the EU and its Eastern neighbourhood did not prevent the French Presidency from keeping open the channel for dialogue and cooperation with **Russia**, accompanied however with additional precautions regarding Moscow's fulfilment of its undertakings. The Nice Summit of 14 November enabled the evaluation of relations to be continued, signs to be obtained of Russia's re-engagement on both economic and commercial matters as well as in foreign policy, and the announcement of **the continuation of negotiations for the future agreement**.

Reinforcement of the **Northern Dimension** was given concrete expression by the holding of the Northern Dimension Ministerial Meeting in October in Saint Petersburg, and by the discussions on the Arctic, notably in connection with the adoption of a communication from the Commission on this subject, which was welcomed by the European Council on 11-12 December.

Following on from the adoption of the EU Strategy for **Central Asia** by the European Council in June 2007, the holding in Paris, on 18 September, of the first EU-Central Asia Forum allowed the issues surrounding security and the various possible threats to regional stability to be particularly highlighted (political and security challenges, trafficking issues, energy-related and environmental threats). This Forum was followed by several developments in the areas of drug trafficking, border management and the rule of law, etc.

➤ ***Development policy***

In an international context marked by crisis, the French Presidency sought to take account of the immediate needs of developing countries while at the same time working towards action that would have greater structural relevance at both the Community and international levels: guaranteeing and ensuring the long-term availability of resources for development, improving the interfacing of policies, and strengthening partnerships.

Food security was the guiding thread of all the actions undertaken. The European Union provided a concrete response in record time to the needs of developing countries by adopting a **one-billion euro Food Facility**. It also involved itself in longer-term action by paying particular attention to special treatment for food products in negotiations for economic partnership agreements and to the productive capacities and competitiveness of agri-food sectors in the countries concerned when putting assistance measures in place; to that end, the investment required to support sub-Saharan agriculture has already been subject to an initial identification process.

With regard to the financial crisis, the Presidency endeavoured to ensure that account was taken of the concerns of developing countries in the G-20 declaration adopted in Washington on 15 November. The **Doha Conference** on financing for development was part of this dynamic focused on the search for international solutions to the systemic crisis. Through strict coordination and detailed guidelines, the European Union, the primary global donor of official development aid, was able to exert very real influence on the negotiations and facilitate a renewed and strengthened international consensus in favour of financing for development. The goal of 0.7% was reaffirmed and recognition given to the principle of definition of timetables. International commitment to increased use of innovative sources of finance was also confirmed. It was decided in principle to hold an international conference to assess the impact of the financial crisis on developing countries and to associate the latter with reform of the international financial system. At the international level, the European Union urged a better-coordinated response to the food crisis, in particular for the setting up of a global partnership for agriculture and food security.

The European Union was also a participant in the forefront at the Third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra. The Accra Agenda for Action should give further impetus to efforts to enhance the effectiveness of aid.

At sector level, the Presidency launched an initiative to reinforce public health systems from the dual standpoint of the combat against the lack of health professionals and health cover in the developing world. A European charter was drawn up on cooperation in the area of support for local governance. With regard to security and development, an action plan is currently being defined.

And finally, the Presidency has endeavoured to strengthen partnerships: for example, in the area of climate change, the European Union undertook to give more consideration to the specific needs of the African continent. To that end, it co-signed a common declaration with the African Union presented jointly to the Poznan Conference. Where migration is concerned, a programme of dynamic action was drawn up jointly with a view to optimisation of the impact of migration on development.

➤ ***Integrating the partner countries into the global economy***

Regional Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) are aimed at stimulating economic growth and development in countries in the African, Caribbean and Pacific area (ACP) by strengthening regional integration, encouraging their inclusion in the global economy on the basis of the gradual and asymmetric opening up of their markets and assisting them financially during these fundamental changes. The French Presidency was thus able to bring together all the conditions needed for **the signing of the first comprehensive regional EPA with the Cariforum** on 15 October 2008 in Barbados and **the interim agreement in preparation for an EPA with Côte d'Ivoire** (26 November).

In the case of the other regions, the Presidency supported progress in **the negotiations for complete regional EPAs**, both in terms of the trade component and the definition of assistance measures. Taking account of the concerns of the ACP countries, the General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting on 10-11 November 2008, unambiguously reaffirmed the principles that must guide the European party: support for regional integration, use of the flexibilities offered by WTO rules and special treatment for food products. The strengthening of direct dialogue between the ACP countries and the Member States, and a timetable for the finalisation of the assistance measures, should enable decisive strides forward to be made in the coming months. Five indicative regional programmes, the main financial vehicles for the assistance measures, were signed in November.

Lastly, the Presidency endeavoured to take forward the procedures for signing and notification to the WTO of the interim agreements initialled in 2007, in order to avoid disturbance to trade with the countries concerned; those procedures should be completed in 2009 under the Czech and Swedish Presidencies.

4.3. Establishing new partnerships with the various players on the international stage

➤ Africa

On 25 July 2008 in Bordeaux, the French Presidency held **the first European Union – South Africa Summit**, in accordance with the provisions of the Strategic Partnership adopted by the EU and South Africa in May 2007. The discussions confirmed the major role played by South Africa on matters related to regional security and in the world on topics of common interest (environment and climate change, human migration, food security).

Political dialogue with our African partners was intensive during the six months of the French Presidency. Several ministerial troikas were organised with African sub-regional organisations (ECOWAS in October, SADC and, for the first time, ECCAS in November) and with the African Union (AU), on 16 September, followed by 20-21 November in Addis Ababa.

The Addis Ababa troika, enlarged to include the Defence Ministers, provided an opportunity to arrive at an initial assessment of the **implementation of the Lisbon Africa-European Union Strategic Partnership** a year after its adoption. The six months of the French Presidency saw the formation of European teams for the implementation of the eight partnerships (Peace and Security – Democratic Governance and Human Rights – Trade/Regional Integration/Infrastructures – the Millennium Development Goals – Energy – Climate Change – Migration/Mobility/Employment – Science/Information Society/Space) and arrangements for their initial meetings. The launch of the exercise for the preparation and certification of the Amani Africa/Eurocamp African Standby Force was a major highlight in the implementation of the peace and security partnership.

In addition, on 25 November France held the **Second Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development** in Paris.

➤ Asia

The **EU-India Summit** held in Marseilles on 29 September 2008 contributed to the strengthening of the strategic partnership launched in 2004: a deepening of cooperation on the climate and energy; the adoption of a new joint action plan extended to include security, sustainable development, research and new technologies, education and culture; new impetus to negotiations on the comprehensive, ambitious and balanced free trade agreement covering goods and services with a view to their conclusion in 2009; the signing of a horizontal civil aviation agreement.

At the **ASEM Summit** which was held in Beijing on 24 and 25 October 2008, the Heads of State or Government focused their discussions on how to respond to the international financial crisis. The European and Asian leaders also undertook to engage in determined cooperation in order to promote sustainable development in all three of its aspects (economic, social and environmental). In the field of climate change, they expressed their wish to arrive at an ambitious, effective and comprehensive agreement in Copenhagen, while considering the most ambitious scenario in the fourth IPCC report.

Despite the postponement of the summit planned to take place in Lyon, several results were achieved with a view to the strengthening of **relations between the European Union and China**. With regard to mitigation of climate change, a plan of action for 2008-2009 was

finalised by the EU-China consultation mechanism for climate change at a meeting in Paris on 18 August 2008. A customs action plan on intellectual property rights was also finalised.

This will intensify exchanges of information between Chinese and European customs authorities working in certain ports and airports, organise training programmes and look forward to possible institutional support programmes. The dialogue on human rights took place in Beijing.

A new **European Union–Australia Partnership Framework** was adopted by the Foreign Ministers' Troika in Paris on 30 October 2008.

The first ministerial meeting between **the European Union and the Pacific Island Forum**, held in Brussels on 16 September 2008, allowed issues to be raised concerning governance and regional security, trade relations, development cooperation and the major global challenges (climate, energy, the Millennium Development Goals).

The conclusions of the Council on 8 December concerning Pakistan gave concrete expression to a strengthening of relations between the EU and Pakistan. The Czech Presidency may organise the first EU–Pakistan summit during the first half of 2009. In addition, free trade negotiations between the EU and Korea, India and the ASEAN countries have made progress. These negotiations are at a very advanced stage in the case of Korea and could come to a conclusion in 2009.

➤ ***Transatlantic relations***

The Quebec Summit of 17 October was a crucial stage in the enhancement of the **economic partnership between the European Union and Canada**: an unparalleled, deeper economic agreement was announced and work to define its exact scope was initiated a few days after the Summit. Formal negotiations should begin immediately following the next Summit, which is scheduled to take place in the spring of 2009 in Prague under the Czech Presidency. In addition, negotiations on the airline services agreement were concluded on 30 November. This agreement provides for the gradual and reciprocal opening up of the European and Canadian markets, in addition to regulatory convergence, notably in the fields of safety, security and competition. Both parties must then set in train the agreement approval process in the lead-up to its signing, which could take place at the EU-Canada Summit in Prague. Practical prospects for cooperation in the energy field were also outlined and the Summit provided an opportunity to reaffirm the very close ties fostered between the EU and Canada in the management of a number of civil and military crises (Afghanistan and Haiti in particular).

Regarding **relations between the European Union and the United States**, the French Presidency endeavoured to define new prospects for the transatlantic partnership, with a view to the installation of a new US administration. Reflections in this area, conducted jointly with all the Member States, the High Representative and the Commission, focused on four major topics: the effectiveness of multilateralism; the situation in the Near and Middle East; the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan; and, lastly, relations with Russia. In addition to these avenues of importance to the future of the transatlantic relationship, a session of the Transatlantic Economic Council took place on 12 December in Washington in order to address a range of matters linked to economic integration between the European Union and the United States. The methods for the preparation and organisation of the Transatlantic Economic Council were reviewed in depth in order to make it a useful instrument for transatlantic economic dialogue.

➤ ***Latin America***

The **Second EU-Brazil Summit** (Rio, 22 December) defined the priorities for the Strategic Partnership launched in 2007, through the adoption of a joint action plan containing a series of concrete commitments in the following fields: security, sustainable development, regional cooperation, research and new technologies, migration, education and culture. This meeting

at the highest level also enabled the dialogue with Brazil to be deepened on the international economic and financial situation and climate negotiations.

Following on from the EU-Mexico Association Agreement, the French Presidency laid the foundations of a **Strategic Partnership between the European Union and Mexico**, leading to the issuance of Council conclusions on 13 October.

On the occasion of the meeting of **the EU Foreign Ministers' Troika with Cuba in Paris** on 16 October 2008, the European Union formally resumed political dialogue with Cuba, a decision in principle to do so having been reached in June 2008.

Finally, the French Presidency sought to consolidate the foundations for common action with **the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean** in line with the focuses defined by the Lima Summit (social cohesion and sustainable development) and began a process of reflection on the organisation of these regular summits in the lead-up to the next meeting, scheduled to take place in Spain in 2010. It pursued negotiations on the Association Agreement with Central America and worked to foster dialogue with the Andes Community and Mercosur in order to reinvigorate negotiations.

➤ **The Gulf**

The French Presidency injected strong political impetus into the negotiations on **the free trade agreement with the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (CCASG)**, which are at a very advanced stage, and the number of outstanding issues has been substantially reduced (human rights clause and export taxes).

Negotiations on a trade and cooperation agreement with Iraq made good progress.

➤ **EFTA**

In addition to the adoption of Council conclusions on the status of relations between the EU and each of the EEA/EFTA countries, the French Presidency took several matters forward, including the projected agreement with Liechtenstein on measures to counter fraud and negotiation of the future financial contribution of the EEA/EFTA States to the cohesion policy, due to be concluded in 2009. The JHA Council meeting of 28 November 2008 also approved **Switzerland's entry into the Schengen area** (land border controls are to end on 12 December 2008, and airport controls are to be lifted on 29 March 2009, subject to the results of further assessment of air borders in February 2009).

4.4. Promoting human rights and the rule of law

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December, the French Presidency set out to emphasise the necessity of pursuing the efforts of the European Union to promote human rights and their universality, in particular in the United Nations and other international bodies.

The French Presidency instigated the adoption by the Council, within the framework of the CFSP, of "guidelines on **violence against women and girls** and combating all forms of discrimination against them". It was also the instigator of a draft transregional declaration calling for **the universal decriminalisation of homosexuality** laid before the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December last.

The French Presidency has also continued to mobilise efforts against **the scourge of child soldiers and the death penalty**. It also held **the first Human Rights Dialogues meeting** between the EU and three Central Asian countries (these being Turkmenistan, Kirghizstan and Kazakhstan) and resolved to institute human rights dialogues with Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Argentina and Colombia, which should take place early next year.

The French Presidency acted on numerous occasions to denounce, and, as far as was possible, to remedy **violations of human rights wherever they occur in the world**, including Iran and Burma, but also the United States and Japan. In all, there were nearly 75 interventions by the European Union (declarations and diplomatic demarches) relating to individual cases and in several instances these led to tangible results (the suspension of the execution of Troy Davis in the United States, for example).

APPENDIX I: THE FRENCH PRESIDENCY IN FIGURES

A budget under control: standing at a provision of €190 million for authorised commitments as passed by Parliament, the budget of the French Presidency was in the middle range of those adopted for recent comparable Presidencies. The concern to keep public expenditure under control and to ensure effective collective management of funds will have made possible a saving of nearly €30 million on the initial budget.

Events enabling complete coverage of French territory: some 550 events organised by the French Presidency – in addition to meetings in institutions in Brussels and Luxembourg – have taken place in 56 French *départements*, including those overseas. The Presidency has in this way been made accessible to a diversified audience not limited to the country's capital alone.

A high level of political mobilisation with regard to the European Parliament: following the February meeting of the Prime Minister in Strasbourg with the President of the European Parliament and the heads of the three main political groups, a series of individual discussions between the President of the Republic and the heads of the political groups during the month of April at the Élysée helped prepare the hosting of the Conference of Presidents in Paris on 25-26 June, which met most notably with the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister. Eleven Committees of the European Parliament have been welcomed to France, most of these in the lead-up to the second half of the year, with meetings at ministerial level in every case. During the Presidency, like the President of the Republic, who participated on three occasions in plenary sessions in Strasbourg and twice welcomed the heads of the political groups to the Élysée (on 8 September to report to them on the European Council meeting of 1 September on Georgia, and on 9 December to discuss with them the December meeting of the European Council), ministers have also been particularly active: there were 110 ministerial visits to the European Parliament during the six months of the Presidency (and nearly 160 over the year as a whole), with 65 contributions to plenary sessions and nearly 40 committee hearings.

A Presidency notable for the absence of any incident in the security domain: this outcome was made possible by the efforts of all concerned, foremost among them the Prefects, in addition to the use of accreditation software enabling efficient management of nearly 90,000 registrations ranging from delegations to suppliers and including the media.

A Presidency that has attached particular importance to multilingualism: given its intensive programme of meetings, the French Presidency was the beneficiary of the unparalleled mobilisation of DG Interpretation (formerly the SCIC) which was involved in nearly a hundred ministerial meetings and conferences. The very great diversity of the languages used led both to an increase in the use of certain languages, such as Czech, and to some unusual configurations, such as that for the Summit of the Union for the Mediterranean on 13 July (29 active and 29 passive languages).

Adding value to French expertise: promotional items designed by Philippe Starck were distributed to the traditional recipients (delegates, journalists, etc.). Similarly, the 140 vehicles made available by carmakers Renault and Peugeot-Citroën provided useful transport coverage for around forty major events.

A reactive, multilingual website: available in most cases in six languages (German, English, Italian, French, Spanish and Polish) and in 23 languages in some instances, and attracting almost a million visitors over the six months, the www.ue2008.fr website was the Presidency's main information vector. Designed along the lines of a press agency and including cutting-edge services (webTV, interactive mapping), it provided journalists, delegates and the general public with effective, swift and comprehensive access to all current news relating to the French Presidency.

APPENDIX II: THE CALENDAR OF THE FRENCH PRESIDENCY

	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
Sun			
Mon			1 Extraordinary European Council (Brussels) Informal Transport (La Rochelle) EP Plenary (Strasbourg)
Tue	1 French Government/Commission seminar (Paris) PSC		2 Informal Transport (La Rochelle) EP Plenary (Strasbourg) PSC
Wed	2 Coreper I Coreper II Euromed Trade (Marseilles)		3 EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Coreper I Coreper II PSC
Thu	3 Informal Environment / Energy (Paris)		4 EP Plenary (Strasbourg)
Fri	4 Informal Environment / Energy (Paris) Coreper I PSC	1	5 Gymnich (Avignon)
Sat	5 Informal Environment / Energy (Paris)	2	6 Gymnich (Avignon)
Sun	6	3	7
Mon	7 EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Informal JHA (Cannes) Eurogroup	4	8 Informal Health (Angers)
Tue	8 EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Informal JHA (Cannes) ECOFIN Council PSC	5	9 Informal Health (Angers) EU - Ukraine Summit (Evian) PSC
Wed	9 EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Coreper I Coreper II	6	10 Coreper I Coreper II (poss.) PSC (poss.)
Thu	10 Address of the French President to the EP (Strasbourg) EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Informal EPSCO (Chantilly)	7	11 Coreper II
Fri	11 Informal EPSCO (Chantilly) Coreper I PSC	8	12 Informal Eurogroup - ECOFIN (Nice) Coreper I
Sat	12 Informal Foreign Affairs (Brest, Roscoff)	9	13 Informal ECOFIN (Nice)
Sun	13 Paris Summit for the Mediterranean	10	14 Foreign Trade Ministers' Dinner
Mon	14 French National Day	11	15 GAERC PSC
Tue	15 Agriculture and Fisheries Council Conciliation Committee (poss.) PSC	12	16 GAERC PSC
Wed	16 Coreper I Coreper II PSC	13	17 Coreper I Coreper II
Thu	17 Informal Competitiveness (Versailles) ECOFIN Budget Council Coreper I	14	18 Informal Family (Paris)
Fri	18 Informal Competitiveness (Versailles / Jouy-en-Josas) Coreper I (poss.) Coreper II (poss.)	15 Assumption Day	19 Coreper I PSC
Sat	19	16	20
Sun	20	17	21 Informal Agriculture (Annecy)
Mon	21 <i>Belgium National Day</i> Exceptional GAERC (Geneva) Informal Culture - Audiovisual (Versailles) Informal Space (Kourou)	18	22 EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Informal Agriculture (Annecy)
Tue	22 GAERC (Brussels and Geneva) Informal Culture - Audiovisual (Versailles) Informal Space (Kourou) PSC	19	23 EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Informal Agriculture (Annecy) Coreper 1 PSC
Wed	23 GAERC Coreper I Coreper II PSC	20	24 EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Coreper I Coreper II
Thu	24 JHA Council Informal PSC (Creil, Versailles)	21	25 EP Plenary (Strasbourg) JHA Council Competitiveness Council
Fri	25 JHA Council EU - South Africa Summit (Bordeaux) Coreper I Informal PSC (Creil, Versailles)	22	26 JHA Council Competitiveness Council (+ poss. Space) PSC
Sat	26	23	27
Sun	27	24	28
Mon	28	25	29 Informal Development Meeting (Bordeaux) Agriculture and Fisheries Council EU - India Summit (Marseilles) PSC (CME 08)
Tue	29 Coreper II PSC	26	30 Informal Development Meeting (Bordeaux) Agriculture and Fisheries Council PSC PSC+5 (CME 08)
Wed	30	27	
Thu	31	28 Coreper II	
Fri		29 PSC	
Sat		30	
Sun		31	

	OCTOBER		NOVEMBER		DECEMBER	
Sun						
Mon					1 Competitiveness Council Eurogroup	
Tue					2 Competitiveness Council ECOFIN Council PSC	
Wed	1	Informal Defence (Deauville) Coreper I Coreper II			3 Mini EP Plenary (Brussels) Conciliation Committee (EP) (poss.) Coreper I Coreper II (poss.) PSC	
Thu	2	EPSCO Council (Luxembourg) Informal Defence (Deauville) PSC (CME08)			4 Mini EP Plenary (Brussels) Environment Council Coreper II	
Fri	3	Coreper I (poss.)	5 Environment Council Coreper I Coreper II			
Sat	4		1	All Saints Day	6	
Sun	5		2	All Souls Day	7	TTE Council (energy) dinner (poss.)
Mon	6	Eurogroup (Luxembourg) PSC (CME 08)	3	Eurogroup Euromed Foreign Affairs (Marseilles) Ministerial Integration Conf. (Vichy)	8	TTE (energy) Council GAERC PSC (poss.)
Tue	7	ECOFIN Council and Euromed ECOFIN (Luxembourg) Coreper I PSC	4	ECOFIN Council Ministerial Integration Conf. (Vichy) Euromed Foreign Affairs (Marseilles) PSC	9	TTE (transport) Council GAERC PSC
Wed	8	Mini EP Plenary (Brussels) Coreper I PSC	5	Coreper I Coreper PSC	10	Coreper I
Thu	9	Mini EP Plenary (Brussels) TTE (transport) Council (Luxembourg) Coreper II	6	Euromed Industry (Nice) Competitiveness Council (poss.) Coreper II	11	European Council (Brussels)
Fri	10	TTE (energy) Council (Luxembourg) PSC (CME 08)	7	Informal meeting of Heads of State and Government (Brussels) Coreper I PSC	12	European Council (Brussels) Coreper 1
Sat	11		8		13	
Sun	12		9	Euromed Employment (Morocco)	14	
Mon	13	GAERC (Luxembourg) PSC (poss.)	10	GAERC (+ Defence) PSC (poss.) Euromed Employment (Morocco) Holiday in France	15	EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Coreper I
Tue	14	GAERC (Luxembourg) Coreper I PSC	11	GAERC (+ Development) Coreper I or Conciliation Committee (poss.) PSC	16	Address of the French President to the EP (Strasbourg) EP Plenary (Strasbourg) EPSCO Council PSC
Wed	15	European Council (Brussels)	12	Coreper I Coreper II	17	Address of the French President to the EP EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Agriculture and Fisheries Council Coreper II
Thu	16	European Council (Brussels)	13		18	EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Agriculture and Fisheries Council Coreper I Coreper II
Fri	17	EU - Canada Summit (Montreal) Coreper I Coreper II PSC	14	Informal Equality Women/Men (Lille) EU - Russia Summit (Nice) Coreper I PSC	19	Agriculture and Fisheries Council Coreper I PSC
Sat	18		15		20	
Sun	19		16		21	
Mon	20	EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Environment Council (Luxembourg) PSC	17	Agriculture and Fisheries Council EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Euromed Health (Egypt)	22	EU - Brazil Summit (Brazil) Euromed Water (Jordan)
Tue	21	Address of the French President to the EP EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Environment Council (Luxembourg) PSC	18	Agriculture and Fisheries Council EP Plenary (Strasbourg) PSC	23	Coreper I (poss.) Coreper II (poss.) PSC (poss.)
Wed	22	EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Coreper I Coreper II	19	EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Coreper I Coreper II	24	
Thu	23	EP Plenary (Strasbourg)	20	EP Plenary (Strasbourg) Education, Youth and Culture Council	25	Christmas
Fri	24	JHA Council (Luxembourg) ASEM Summit (Beijing) Coreper I PSC	21	ECOFIN Budget Council Education, Youth and Culture Council Coreper I	26	
Sat	25	ASEM Summit, EU-South Korea Summit (Beijing)	22		27	
Sun	26		23		28	
Mon	27	Agriculture and Fisheries Council (Luxembourg)	24	Informal Housing, Urban Development, Regional Planning and Cohesion Policy (Marseilles) Coreper 1	29	
Tue	28	Agriculture and Fisheries Council (Luxembourg) PSC	25	Informal Education (Bordeaux) Informal Housing, Urban Development, Regional Planning and Cohesion Policy (Marseilles) Paris conference on migration and development Coreper I PSC	30	Informal Foreign Affairs (Paris)
Wed	29	Coreper I Coreper II	26	Informal Education (Bordeaux) Coreper I Coreper II	31	
Thu	30		27	JHA Council TTE (telecommunications) Council Informal Sport (Biarritz)		
Fri	31	Coreper I	28	JHA Council Agriculture and Fisheries Council Informal Sport (Biarritz) Coreper I		
Sat			29			
Sun			30			