

- Dear Honourable Members of the European Parliament, Ladies and Gentlemen, first of all, I would like to thank you for inviting me to your committee to present the priorities of the Slovak Presidency. I am pleased and honoured that I have opportunity to be part of such an important moment for Slovakia - our first ever Presidency in the Council of the European Union.
- The European citizens should be placed at the heart of the EU's agenda. With this in mind, I firmly believe that we can achieve this together. The Slovak Presidency is aware of the importance of the European Parliament. Therefore I consider vital to cooperate with the European Parliament, as one of the co-legislators, and seek for common European solutions benefiting our citizens and businesses in the whole European Union.
- Delivering a deeper and fairer Single Market will be instrumental in creating new jobs, promoting productivity and ensuring an attractive climate for investment and innovation.
- Europe can make a difference by making the digital single market a reality, deepening the single market for goods and services, and reap the potential for further growth, job creation and innovation.
- In this regard, the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer protection is an important partner for us.
- I have recently had the privilege to meet with this Parliament and many individual MEPs during my visits to Brussels and Strasbourg. And I look forward to continuing this close and fruitful cooperation.

- At our today's meeting, I would like to first present the main priorities guiding the Slovak Presidency in the area of Competitiveness. Then, I will further discuss the topics of common interest and will present you the Slovak priorities in the area of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection.
- The Slovak Presidency is putting forward a positive agenda and seeks to promote sustainable solutions. Economically strong Europe and a modern single market belong to the top priorities of our Presidency. Moreover, these priority topics will be driven by three interconnected principles:
  1. **Achieving tangible results** – our aim is to demonstrate to EU citizens that joint European projects have a practical impact on improving their quality of life;
  2. **Overcoming fragmentation** – we will seek to achieve results which help connect Member States more closely within the single market;
  3. **Focusing on the citizen** – the ability to deliver specific results is the key in bringing the Union closer to its citizens. The Slovak Presidency aims to restore citizens' confidence in the common European project.
- As the Minister of Economy, I would like to present our **top priorities** in the area of **Competitiveness – Single Market and Industry**.
- In the area of the **Single Market and Consumer Protection**, we are committed to continue deepening the single market and digital single market. The Single Market for goods and services is at the heart of Europe's competitiveness. Since its creation in 1993, it has been the driving force for European prosperity boosting competition, innovation, jobs, growth for businesses, and greater choice for consumers on the European market.

- We are aware that we need to reinforce consumers' trust in the Single Market and motivate them to do cross-border transactions. Therefore we welcomed the Commission proposals announced in the Single Market Strategy and we are committed to facilitate the negotiation process on the individual proposals.
- I am pleased that I can chair the meetings of the Competitiveness Council during our Presidency and hence contribute to the deepening of the Single Market and creation of the Digital Single Market.
- During our Presidency the focus will be on the upcoming legislative files:
  - To remove barriers to e-commerce, tackling **unjustified geo-blocking** preventing online customers from accessing and purchasing products and services from websites in other Member States, will be our priority for the Competitiveness Council among the Internal Market files. Our goal is to achieve a General Approach at the Council in November;
  - We also aim to facilitate the discussions and achieve General Approach on the **Consumer Protection Cooperation Regulation (CPC)**. It is essential to ensure better, smarter and faster enforcement of single market rules. In this regard, the emphasis should be laid upon the most distorting barriers and infringements.
- We foresee to reach progress in the Council with other files which are going to be tabled during the next semester, namely:
  - **Reforming of the Notification Procedure under the Services Directive,**
  - **Single Market Information Tool,**

- Furthermore, **Services passport**, which can make it easier for businesses to provide services in other Member States and therefore could be an important instrument in this regard.
- In addition, we will also facilitate discussions in the Council on the non-legislative files such as **Collaborative economy**. The collaborative economy is growing rapidly. As it takes root in the EU, national and local authorities are responding with different regulatory actions. This fragmented approach to new business models creates uncertainty for traditional operators and new services providers and may hamper innovation, job creation and growth. Therefore, our role is to encourage a regulatory environment that allows new business models to develop while protecting consumers and ensuring fair taxation and employment conditions.
- I am very pleased by your commitment to **strengthen the single market** and welcome the allocation of the new files presented by the European Commission in May among committees and political groups of the European Parliament.
- The recent crisis in steel sector and rising voices from other industries show that we in Europe are not always successful in providing the best regulatory and business environment for industry to grow. We must therefore join our efforts to protect the European industry in Europe.
- We very much believe that industry has to play a crucial role in our economies being considered a major provider of regional employment. Moreover, during our Presidency we will also promote achievement of a political target set by the European Commission of having **20 % of GDP in**

**Europe coming from the industry.** To achieve this we will focus on three specific areas:

- **Modernization of Industry,**
  - **Competitiveness Mainstreaming** and
  - Attention to **Energy intensive Industries,** including **Steel. Market Economy Status for China** will also be on the agenda.
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- Last but not least, I would like to stress that **well designed regulatory environment** is an essential precondition for proper functioning of the internal market enabling more growth and jobs within the EU.
  - We live in the world which can be characterized by a rapid technological and digital developments and innovative solutions. The new disruptive technologies and innovations bring new challenges for the policy-makers. Therefore, we need a legislation that is **flexible enough, future-proof and enables more innovation.** It is essential for our economic growth and jobs to **focus on the quality of European regulations,** which should fit for their purpose and not impose unnecessary burdens on the businesses. In the same time, proper protection of consumer rights, employee interests, environment and public health should remain at the heart of the EU legislation.
  - During the Slovak Presidency, the **Better Regulation agenda** will be focused on how to make regulation **future proof and enabling more innovation.** Following the Council conclusions on better regulation from May 2016 we will also facilitate the exchange of best practices and we will implement the remaining issues of the Interinstitutional agreement on better law making.

- To conclude, I am very pleased that I have had the opportunity to present Slovak priorities and to inform you about our plans regarding the relevant dossiers for your Committee. I am also aware that the IMCO committee has been working actively on many other files such as the Revision of the Firearms Directive, Type Approval, Parcel delivery, Fertilizers, Customs policy and others. The Slovak Presidency and my colleagues primarily responsible for these files will devote efforts to continue working constructively on these files.
- The Slovak Presidency will work hard to contribute to a better law-making. We want to be pragmatic and concentrate on projects that bring direct benefits to EU citizens in order to restore trust in the European project. We want to be a reliable partner that can support the European Union and help to advance the Single Market. To achieve our goals, we also rely on the cooperation with the preceding and following Presidencies – Netherlands and Malta. I would like to thank the Dutch colleagues for their efforts and for the successful cooperation.
- Madam Chair, honourable Members of the European Parliament, let me conclude that I truly look forward to a fruitful collaboration with the European Parliament and I am very interested in your views on the ambitions of the Slovak presidency and any questions you may have in that regard.
- The Slovak Republic and my colleagues are ready to make every effort to deliver positive and tangible results in the field of EU competitiveness as well as in other fields where progress is needed.
- Thank you very much for your attention.