

## **ESTONIA'S PRIORITIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION DURING THE BELGIAN PRESIDENCY**

Estonia's focus during the Belgian Presidency will be on the following issues:

1. Estonia prioritises strengthening of budgetary policies and overall level of competitiveness in the European Union. Estonia wishes to join a strong and functioning Eurozone and believes that restoring market confidence in the Eurozone is crucial. Sustainability of public finances is the main operative tool for recovery of EU's economies. Strengthening of surveillance and coordination of budgetary positions are the key for successful functioning of the EU, and especially of the EMU. Therefore, rigorous implementation of the stability and growth pact; enhanced economic policy coordination and when necessary, establishment of tougher sanctions, is needed.
2. Estonia's goal is to strengthen competitiveness of the European economy by re-launching the single market. Our interest therefore, is a smoothly functioning single market. In the context of the re-launch of the single market it is important that the Single Market Act, currently prepared by the European Commission, be ambitious and lead to reduction of differences and market fragmentation. The Act should include proposals for specific actions (package of measures) for deepening of the single market and timetable for implementation. The creation of the digital single market should be an integral part of the re-launch of the single market. The possibilities that the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) offer and which did not exist when the single market was established, should now be fully exploited. Further attention should also be given to actions already underway to remove bottlenecks in the internal market and boost the European economy: single EU patent, services directive, further development of the recognition of qualifications.
3. Estonia's objective is to reform EU's common agricultural policy in a way that it would be fair to all Member States and would enable European agricultural sector to become more competitive and sustainable in the future. Estonia's main priority in the CAP 2013+ debate is to modify the definition of direct payment scheme since the current system, based on historical production levels, cannot be considered equitable. The level of direct payments per hectare in Estonia is one of the lowest in EU.
4. Estonia prioritises the establishment of an agency for managing and developing information technology systems related to the field of internal security in the European Union. Estonia believes that political agreement on the establishment of the agency of internal security is possible during Belgian presidency. Estonia wishes to host the seat of the aforementioned Agency. We are convinced that Estonia would be a favourable choice for all EU member states by providing the EU with a modern, stable and flexible information technology environment that would satisfy long-term IT-related needs in the area of justice, freedom and security. The choice would also support the aim of balanced development of the Union.