



**EUROPEAN UNION  
FORWARD LOOK FOR 2009**

## **EU FORWARD LOOK 2009**

### **Introduction**

This document provides a brief summary of the main priorities for Scotland of the EU Presidency for 2009 with a particular focus on the Czech Presidency for the first 6 months of the year. The full programme of the Czech Presidency can be found at: <http://www.eu2009.cz/en/czech-presidency/programme-and-priorities/programme-and-priorities-479/>

The Forward Look should be read alongside the Scottish Government EU priority dossiers which can be found at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/International-Relations/Europe/EuropeanStrategy/EU-Priorities>

### **Key Dates**

1 January 2009	Czech Presidency begins
19-20 March 2009	European Council Summit
4-7 June 2009	European Parliament Elections
18-19 June	European Council Summit
1 July 2009	Swedish Presidency begins
5-6 November 2009	European Council Summit
17-18 December 2009	European Council Summit

### **The next 12 months**

#### **Issues of importance for Scotland in 2009**

Over the next year, the Scottish Government will have some key areas to focus on in the European Union.

- Territorial Cohesion – consultation on the Green Paper is due to close at the end of February.
- Economic Recovery Plan - the Commission issued this plan last year, which was then agreed by the European Council in December.
- Financial Services Reform – de Larosière group due to report at end of February and Commission to respond shortly thereafter.
- Energy Security - high on the EU political agenda and the initiative report on the second strategic energy review is going through the European Parliament. Also includes progress and developments with Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)

- Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) – this is a key issue for Scotland in view of the Commission’s forthcoming Green Paper (spring 2009) which will ask a number of fundamental questions about the future design of Europe’s Fisheries Policy (post 2012).
- EU Budget Review – **see below**.
- Cross-Border Healthcare - First reading to go before the European Parliament plenary session in March.
- Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) - the on-going debate will continue in the EU on the long-term development of the CAP (post 2013) alongside a debate on the future of the EU’s agricultural product quality policy (a key issue for Scotland in view of its National Food and Drink policy).
- Research – on-going developments of the European Research Area (ERA) and start of discussions on the main themes of the 8<sup>th</sup> Research Framework Programme (FP8).

### **The Lisbon Treaty**

Last year saw ratifying the Lisbon Treaty as a key objective for both the Slovenian and French Presidencies. Following the Irish no-vote in June 2008, this is still a very topical issue. It has now been agreed that there will be a second referendum in Ireland later in 2009 and, if there is a ‘yes’ vote, full Treaty ratification will follow either late in 2009 or early 2010.

### **Czech Presidency, 1 January 2009**

The Czech Presidency began on 1 January 2009 and will run until 30 June 2009. The main priorities for the Presidency will be the **economy, energy and the EU in the world**. Preparing for the threat of an economic slowdown due to the Financial Crisis will be imperative throughout the Czech Presidency. The key issues and objectives outlined by the Czech Presidency include some of the following: enlargement, the future of the Lisbon Treaty, the economic crisis, the Lisbon strategy for jobs and growth, CAP reform, better regulation, research and innovation, and the second strategic energy review.

### **Swedish Presidency, 1 July 2009**

Sweden will take over the Presidency from the Czech Republic on 1 July 2009. It is expected that the main focus of the Swedish Presidency will be on Climate Change and ensuring agreement is reached at the UN Climate Change conference to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009. Other issues likely to be a priority include: Employment, growth and competitiveness (the Lisbon Strategy), emphasis on a more “secure” and “open” Europe, seeing the EU as a global actor and encouragement of EU enlargement, the Budget Review and finalising the new Justice and Home Affairs Programme for 2010-2015.

## **European Parliament Elections**

The European Parliament elections will take place between the 4-7 June 2009. The elections will be held under the existing rules within the Treaty of Nice which will result in the total number of MEPs reducing from 785 to around 736. The number of UK MEPs will reduce from 78 to 72 and in the case of Scotland, the number of MEPs will change from 7 to 6. In due course, subject to ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, the Parliament will consist of 751 seats, including 73 from the UK.

The first business of the Parliament will take place before the summer break at the end of July and will be to elect its President. The Parliament will then allocate MEPs to committees and appoint Chairs of committees. In the Autumn, the Parliament will approve of the new college of Commissioners.

## **New College of European Commissioners**

According to the Treaty of Nice, it was envisaged that the first Commission to be appointed after the number of member states reaches 27 would, subject to a unanimous decision of the Council, be reduced to less than the number of Member States. This was intended to result in a significant reduction in the number of Commissioners, though no specific number was written into the Treaty. However, following the European Council in Brussels in December 2008, the Council has agreed that, subject to ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, a decision will be taken to enable the Commission to continue to include a national from each member state. The President of the Commission is proposed by the European Council. The candidate must then be approved by the European Parliament by a majority vote. It is subsequently matter for the new Commissioner President to choose Commissioners, who must be confirmed by the Council and the Parliament. This process is likely to take place in the Autumn of 2009.

## **Budget Approval**

The Commission will present a proposal for the 2010 budget (called the "Preliminary Draft Budget") in spring 2009. The Budget will then need approval between September and December 2009 by the Council and the European Parliament.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

The Commission published a **European Economic Recovery Plan** in November 2008 which was agreed in December 2008 by the European Council. The plan has two key pillars: an immediate **budgetary impulse** of around €200 billion which should be timely, targeted and co-ordinated; and **ten actions for recovery** to put in place the conditions to develop long term recovery and growth. It is intended that these measures will boost employment and skills, energy efficiency, broadband infrastructure and trans-European energy interconnections. There is a specific proposal to allocate €5 billion of underspend from 2008 for **new investment in energy and internet broadband infrastructure and rural development** in 2009-2010. The **Spring European Council** will evaluate the implementation of the recovery package and take forward the discussion on economic priorities and long-term measures to stimulate growth.

Timing of the publication of the **EU Budget Review** White Paper is still unclear and it may not take place until the second half of the year when Sweden will hold the Presidency.

Work will continue on **supervision of financial services**. The de Larosière Group has been asked by the Commission to bring forward proposals which will contribute to greater financial stability in Europe and help maximise protection for depositors, policy-holders and investors. It is expected that the de Larosière recommendations will be incorporated in a Communication which around early March and in time for consideration at the Spring European Council.

## COMPETITIVENESS

The Presidency will take forward the discussion on the future of the **Lisbon Strategy** beyond 2010. Its aim will be to support the debate on the setting of new priorities in the light of the current economic situation and work towards agreement on the long term measures that will encourage the recovery for economic growth in the EU.

The EU **Small Business Act** (SBA) was agreed during the French Presidency and is aimed at improving the situation for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). The Presidency intends to focus on the implementation of concrete measures arising from the SBA.

Improving the **Better Regulation** dossier will be a priority for the Presidency. The target of a 25% reduction on administrative burdens on business by 2012 will continue to be a focus and the Better Regulation progress report is due to be published in March.

## **TRANSPORT**

The Presidency has **four key priorities** on transport. Optimisation of the functioning of the internal transport market; elimination of administrative barriers to business in the transport sector; competitiveness of the EU transport system; and road safety. The Presidency plans to take forward work that will help speed up the implementation of the action plan for the support of **intelligent transport systems**. It is also hoped that progress may be made on the **Action Plan for Urban Mobility**.

## **TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

The Presidency will work towards the implementation of the goal of the Action Plan i2010 in securing the possibility of access to the services of **e-Government** for all citizens by 2010. The Presidency will also aim to secure adoption of the proposal to allow more effective use of **spectrum** and continue negotiation on the Commission's proposal on revision of **roaming price** for mobile phone use.

## **COHESION POLICY**

The Presidency intends to continue the debate on the aims, strategies and priorities related to the development of the **Economic and Social Policy** of the EU and in particular the shape of **Cohesion Policy** beyond 2013. This work will be taken forward alongside the consultation on **Territorial Cohesion**, which is due to close at the end of February 2009. Simplification of the administration of Structural Funds will also form part of the debate.

## **AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES**

### **CAP Reform**

Whilst no formal EU political decisions are required to be taken on **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** reform this year, the Czech and indeed Swedish Presidencies will continue to progress the debate on the Long Term Future of the CAP (post 2013). The Czech Presidency is keen to discuss a fairer distribution of CAP spending between Member States, more market orientation for the CAP and means of increasing the value of agricultural production in the EU. The Czech Presidency will continue efforts to conclude the current WTO round. The Future of CAP is to be discussed at an Informal Meeting of Agriculture Ministers in the Czech Republic (31 May -2 June) with the Presidency aiming to agree Council conclusions on the Long Term Development of the CAP at the June Agriculture Council.

In addition to the longer term debate, work will continue this year on simplification of the CAP.

## **Agricultural Product Quality**

The Czech Presidency will take forward the review of **EU Food Quality Policy** set out in the European Commission's Green Paper of October 2008. The paper discusses ways of helping farmers make more of EU produce to strengthen their position in the global market place. The paper considers the role of existing mechanisms including opportunities for simplification. Whilst no legislative proposals are planned before 2010, a High Level Conference is due to be held in Prague on 12-13 March. Output from the Conference and the responses to the Green paper will help the European Commission prepare a Communication on Agriculture Quality Policy by the end of May which will probably be debated at the May Agriculture Council. The Czech Presidency is hoping to secure Council Conclusions at the June Agriculture Council.

## **Rural Development and Less Favoured Areas (LFAs)**

The Czech Presidency will initiate a debate on new approaches to designating **LFAs**.

## **Food**

The Czech and Swedish Presidencies will seek to make progress on a proposed **EU Regulation on Food Labelling**. The Czech Presidency will also aim to progress a regulation on **novel foods** aimed at simplifying the authorisation process.

## **Veterinary Issues**

Draft EU legislation to **protect animals at slaughter** will be progressed and the Czech Presidency will also seek to broker an agreement between the European Council and the European Parliament on a proposed regulation on **Animal By Products not intended for human consumption**. The Presidency is also planning to initiate a debate on revising legislation in the field of **protection of animals used for research purposes**. It is possible this year that the European Commission will seek to produce further proposals limiting journey times for the transportation of animals. This is a key issue for Scotland given the remoteness of some farms from abattoirs/markets.

## **Common Fisheries Policy**

Key dossiers for agreement this year include proposals for revising rules on **technical conservation measures** and the CFP's **control system**. Work will be progressed on long term management Plans for **Northern Hake** and **Horse mackerel** and the **Commission has produced an Action Plan for the Conservation and Management of sharks**. Promoting a sustainable aquaculture industry (including organic aquaculture) will be key issue this year. A European Commission communication on the **Sustainable Development of Community Aquaculture** is due in April. This is an issue of great importance to Scotland with 80% of UK production. Council conclusions on this issue are likely to be sought at the June Agriculture Council.

Attention this year will also turn to the development of the **Common Fisheries Policy** post 2012. A Commission Green Paper mapping out options should emerge in April of this year. This will set the scene for a debate on the CFP throughout this year and next. Legislative proposals are likely to emerge in 2011.

## **Forestry**

Combating **illegal logging** will remain a priority for this Presidency and future ones. The Czech Presidency will aim to progress draft legislation laying down the obligations for operators who place timber and timber products on the market.

## **EDUCATION, YOUTH AND CULTURE**

The Presidency will focus on negotiating the future **strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training beyond 2010**, which was presented in a Commission communication on December 2008. The framework is expected to set the long-term objectives of European cooperation in the next decade. The Czech Presidency will prepare Key Messages in the field of education for the spring meeting of the European Council, which should provide the mandate for the approval of the new strategic framework at the Education, Youth and Culture Council in May.

On 16 December 2008 the European Commission presented its **Communication on New Skills for New Jobs** for better job matching and more effective ways to analyse and predict which skills will be needed in tomorrow's labour market.

At a conference in May 2009 the Czech Presidency will launch the recommendations on the **European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)** and the European **Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF)**. Between them, these tools will make it easier to transfer credits from one training system to another, and will provide authorities with common tools for the management of quality of learning.

The Czech Presidency will be responsible for evaluating the implementation of the priorities of the **Bologna process** set for 2007–2009, and in preparing the interim report on the overall development for 1999–2009 and the supporting documentation for defining the vision of higher education beyond 2010.

On **youth** issues, the Commission will publish a summary of progress in cooperation on youth matters and will propose a future framework for post-2009. There will also be a green paper on promoting cross-border mobility of young people, which will be a starting point for an initiative seeking to develop mobility beyond the Erasmus programme.

In addition, the annual priorities for the **Youth in Action funding programme** will be: the European Year of Creativity and Innovation; young people's active participation in the European Parliament elections; combating violence against women; sport as a tool to promote active citizenship and social inclusion of young

people; promoting healthy lifestyles through physical activities including sport; promoting the inclusion of young people with disabilities; awareness-raising to global challenges (such as sustainable development and climate change); young people's involvement in the revision of the European framework of cooperation in the field of youth policy; and intercultural dialogue.

To mark the **European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009**, the development and relationship between creativity and culture will be discussed at the ministerial conference entitled Forum for Creative Europe, which will be held in Prague in March 2009. The conference will primarily address the issues of creative industry and economy, the relation of civil society to creativity and the implementation of cultural strategies.

## **ENERGY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT**

### **Energy and Climate Change**

Addressing the issue of **climate change** and its linkages with energy policy will be a key priority for the Czech Presidency, as well as the Swedish Presidency in the second half of 2009. Work will be taken forward to achieve the objectives set by the European Council in March 2007, where the EU committed itself to reducing its overall emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 20% below 1990 levels by 2020 – 30% subject to an International agreement. The target for renewables in the energy mix is 20% by 2020 and the Presidencies will, respecting the Member State's choice of energy mix, strive for a low carbon economy that is consistent with both sustainability and cost efficiency and that positively contributes to broader growth objectives consistent with the 'Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs'.

Central to the work on climate change will be formulating the EU's position in advance of the International climate change negotiations due to take place at the UN Climate Change conference to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009. The Presidency will work towards agreement of an EU consolidated position aimed at pressing the other key International players into agreeing a meaningful and workable framework for a post Kyoto package of measures. The foundations for the EU's position are set in the 2020 targets and the climate/energy packaged agreed in December 2008.

### **Energy Security**

Energy security is a top EU priority for 2009 and beyond, particularly in the current climate of dependency on resources outside the EU. Guaranteeing energy security is a necessary prerequisite for the EU's economic development and political stability and this is reflected in the EU's second **Strategic Energy Review** that was published in November 2008. The Presidency intends to contribute to its strengthening, primarily in three respects: by identifying priority infrastructure projects; by supporting the development of energy infrastructure; and by creating and developing contractual relationships with third countries and regions. With regards external energy relations the focus will be on Russia, Ukraine and the Caspian region.

The Presidency will support activities leading to the completion of the construction of the missing segments in the existing energy transmission and transport infrastructure within the EU, and improved coordination of the transmission system operators. They will also seek agreement on a review of the rules applicable to the creation of emergency crude oil and petroleum products stocks. The legislation will aim to ensure that each Member State should have access to emergency stocks.

Another priority within the energy agenda will be to complete the negotiations on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Liberalisation Package. The creation of a transparent, stable, efficient and interconnected internal electricity and gas market is seen as a necessary prerequisite for a secure, sustainable and competitive energy supply. Council have consolidated their position on these proposals – it is now requiring the agreement of the European Parliament.

### **Energy Technologies**

Starting in the first half of 2009 the Presidency will stimulate debate on the implementation of the **European Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET-Plan)**. The focus will be to come forward with a recommendation on how to develop the SET-Plan into practical steps and initiatives, including the strengthening of research and development and the development of new forms of cooperation. This will include progressing work on **Carbon Capture and Storage**, particularly on the three important stages of collection, transportation and safe storage.

### **Environment**

As part of the three Presidency programme, work will continue to be driven forward on a number of ongoing dossiers under the Environment agenda. These include biodiversity, environmental technologies, chemicals, soil and GMOs. As part of forthcoming proposals from the Commission there will be an initiative on the **Shared Environment Information System**, water scarcity and drought, as well as discussions on the dismantling of ships in the context of the Basel Convention. International environmental governance will also be dealt with in the context of the United Nation's framework.

## JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

### Future JHA Policy<sup>1</sup>

The overarching objective of the Czech Presidency in relation to JHA matters is more efficient legal proceedings and more certainty for citizens. A Commission Communication on **the future JHA programme** for 2010-2015 is expected in May 2009 and the Czech Presidency will initiate discussions in the Council about this. The programme will be finalised during the Swedish Presidency during autumn 2009. A Commission Communication is also expected in May 2009 on the future direction of work on **mutual recognition of judgements in civil and criminal matters**. These will determine the context for future EU JHA policy.

### Criminal law and policing

Negotiations are underway in respect of a proposed Framework Decision on the prevention and settlement of **conflicts of jurisdiction in criminal proceedings**. This is to establish a system of exchange of information with a view to preventing parallel proceedings where 2 or more Member States have jurisdiction for conducting proceedings against the same person on the same person.

The Czech Presidency will also take forward the fourth round of mutual evaluations about the **practical application of the European Arrest Warrant**.

Negotiations will also continue on a **Directive on criminal sanctions for ship-source pollution**.

**Improving EU Child protection** is a Presidency priority especially the fight against child pornography and other illegal internet activities. The Presidency will take forward implementation of the recent “**Safer Internet Programme**” and promote the new EU missing **child alert system**. An inter-Ministerial conference will also take place in April 2009 which will focus in particular on international police cooperation and measures to curb illegal online content.

During the Czech Presidency, negotiations are expected to begin on Commission proposals about revising Framework Decisions on **combating human trafficking** and also the **sexual exploitation of children and child pornography**.

The Czech Presidency is also organising a conference in March 2009 focusing on the **protection of vulnerable victims** in criminal proceedings. This is in advance of Commission Proposals during the Swedish Presidency on measures to provide assistance and compensate victims of crime.

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<sup>1</sup> Subject to ratification of the **Lisbon Treaty**, criminal law and policing issues will, as with civil law measures (other than family law), largely become subject to co-decision, Qualified Majority Voting and the European Court of Justice’s general jurisdiction. Family law measures will, however, continue to be subject to unanimity (“special legislative procedure”). The UK will have a general “opt-out” in relation to JHA matters.

## **Civil (including family) law**

A Commission proposal is expected in March 2009 for a Regulation harmonising choice of law, jurisdiction, recognition and enforcement in the field of **succession and wills**. The Czech Presidency will open the discussions on this proposal to be continued during the Swedish Presidency.

The Czech Presidency will also take forward discussions on proposals to set up a mechanism authorising Member States to negotiate and conclude **bilateral agreements** with non-EU States in areas otherwise falling within exclusive Community competence. More generally, the Presidency will continue ongoing work on the **accession of the Community to international conventions** negotiated within the framework of the Hague Conference on private International Law and the Council of Europe.

Work will also continue on the **Common Frame of Reference for EU Contract Law**, to be developed as “toolbox” containing non-binding model contract rules, definitions etc. which can be used as appropriate by parties to cross-border EU contracts.

A Commission Report is also expected on the revision of Regulation 44/2001 on the recognition and enforcement of judgements in civil and commercial matters (“**the Brussels I Regulation**”). This is with a view to a future Commission proposal for amendment of that Regulation.

With regard to the recently stalled “**Rome III**” proposal on jurisdiction and applicable law in matrimonial matters (**cross-border divorce**), the Commission is considering whether to submit a new proposal on the basis of enhanced cooperation. If the proposal is submitted, the Czech presidency is prepared to launch negotiations.

## **Miscellaneous**

In relation to **e-justice** (the subject of a ministerial conference in February), the Czech Presidency will take forward measures to implement the recent Action Plan, including working towards the creation of an **e-justice portal** by the end of 2009. The Presidency is also keen to promote the greater use of **video-conferencing** in cross-border cases and to further develop the pilot project regarding **integrating national insolvency registers** and a **database of EU translators and interpreters**.

As regards **immigration and asylum**, the Czech Presidency will progress implementation of the recent **European Pact on Immigration and Asylum** as well as the **Global Approach to Migration** which seeks to develop partnerships with countries outside the EU on migration issues. There will also be consideration of Commission proposals for the next stage of the **Common European Asylum System** and further discussions in light of the Commission’s **review of the Free Movement Directive**.

The Czech Presidency is also committed to work on an **EU data-sharing strategy**, the implementation of a **second-generation Schengen Information System (SIS II)**

and **Visa Information System**, and continuing negotiations on the collection and exchange of **Passenger Name Records** for law enforcement purposes.

In relation to **external relations**, the Czech Presidency (and subsequently the Swedish Presidency) will take forward work on a new **Strategy for the External Dimension of JHA**. In the fight against **terrorism**, the Czech Presidency will pay particular attention to cooperation with law enforcement agencies of the Western Balkans. The Presidency will also take forward work to implement the recent **EU Drugs Action Plan for 2009-2012**. Finally, the Czech Presidency will also take forward discussions on a mandate for negotiating an **agreement on mutual legal assistance with Japan**.

## HEALTH

The Czech Presidency will aim to resolve questions on **patients' rights in cross-border healthcare** including the management of the influx of patients, the role of private service providers, and guarantees on the quality and security of cross-border healthcare. Although the directive is scheduled to go before the European Parliament in March 2009, there is a fair chance that it will not be adopted at first reading and may therefore be picked up again after the European Parliament elections in the summer.

The **Green Paper on the European Workforce for Health** was launched on 15 December 2008 and the consultation will remain open until March 31<sup>st</sup> 2009. The consultation covers a number of challenges facing health systems in Europe such as the ageing population; communicable diseases; the mobility of health professionals and the potential contribution of ICT to healthcare.

Also relevant to health workforce issues is the amendment to the **Working Time Directive**. The outcome of ongoing discussions could have a significant bearing on health workforce issues, such as the definitions of on-call time and the status of the opt-out to the 48-hour week. The Directive will go into "conciliation" in early 2009 following the European Parliament's rejection of the Council's common position in December 2008.

On 10 December 2008 the Commission published "**A Renewed Vision for the Pharmaceutical Sector**", consisting of: A communication on ways to improve market access and to develop initiatives to boost EU pharmaceutical research; a proposal to tackle counterfeiting and illegal distribution of medicines; proposals to enable citizens to have access to high-quality information on prescription-only medicines; and proposals to improve patient protection by strengthening the EU system for the safety monitoring ('pharmacovigilance') of medicines. The Czech and Swedish Presidencies will be responsible for managing the negotiations on the legislative proposals in the package, which may become law during 2010.

Council working group discussions directive on standards of **quality and safety of human organs intended for transplantation** will begin in earnest from early 2009, and a series of debates on a 10 point Action Plan will take place throughout the year.

The Commission will publish an initiative on **rare diseases** which the Czech presidency will hope to get adopted at Council by June and through first reading at the

European Parliament in May. The Czechs will also hold a conference around the Commission communication on the **safety of patients and control of infections linked with provision of health care** on 15-16 April 2009, which will inform recommendations for concrete measures for cooperation and quality assurance in antibiotic programmes.

The Commission's Communication on **reducing health inequalities in the EU** seeks to raise awareness and turn health inequalities into a policy priority in all EU countries. It will support Member States in their actions to tackle inequalities in health, notably through the structural funds and the exchange of good practices, and help to improve existing mechanisms to monitor inequalities in health across the EU.

As a result, the Commission will adopt an initiative in 2009 on **Alzheimer's and neurodegenerative disease** on research, the exchange of best practices between Member States, and the improvement of the quality of epidemiological data on the prevalence and incidence of these diseases. They will also establish a **European Platform for action against cancer** covering issues such as: comparable data and evidence to support learning and sharing knowledge; priorities for cancer research; prevention; identification and promotion of good practice in cancer-related healthcare across Europe; updating the "European Code Against Cancer" giving concrete science-based recommendations to citizens to minimise their cancer risk.

The Commission will present a communication on **combating HIV/AIDS** which will focus on priorities and actions towards improved access to treatment, care and support throughout Europe and on activities against stigmatisation and discrimination and will link to broader Public Health issues such as injuries, drug use and sexual health.

## RESEARCH

Throughout 2009 the Council presidencies and the Commission will continue working to develop various initiatives that will contribute towards the European Research Area (ERA).

The Czech Presidency will continue with negotiations to establish an EU legal basis for **large research infrastructures**, including discussions on the update to the “roadmap” of priority future infrastructure projects drawn up by the European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures (ESFRI). A conference on “Strengthening the ERA through research infrastructures” will be held in Prague from 24-25 March. The Czech presidency hopes to get Council conclusions agreed at the Competitiveness Council on 28-29 May.

The **ex-post evaluation of 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for research (FP6)** should be published by the Commission in early 2009, with the **mid-term evaluation of the 7th Framework Programme (FP7)** following in April. The results of these reports coupled with the outcomes of a conference in Prague on 24-25 February on the impact assessment of R&D expenditure will inform Council conclusions planned for May. They will also have some bearing on discussions later in the year on the priorities of FP8, which will begin in 2014.

As part of the Ljubljana Process towards the “2020 Vision” for the European Research Area, work will continue on the implementation of initiatives on **joint programming** of EU and national R&D funding priorities, and on **international science and technology cooperation** with third countries. These themes will feature strongly in discussions during the informal meeting of the Competitiveness Council on 3-4 May on Prague. The Czech Presidency may prepare Council Conclusions on the progress of the Ljubljana Process for the formal Competitiveness Council on 28-29 May.

Developing **research careers** will also be a major theme of 2009, with the implementation of the European partnership for researchers, covering issues such as barriers to cross-border mobility within the EU. There will be a conference on mobility on 28-29 April, and another on women in science on 14-15 May, both in Prague.

Other items coming up in 2009 include Commission communications on **University-Business dialogue** and on **ICT Research and Innovation**; and the selection of the first **Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC)** by the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT).

## EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Mobility of workers will be a particular priority of the Czech Presidency, with Council conclusions to follow on from the 2008 Commission Communication on the **“impact of free movement of workers in the context of EU enlargement”**; conclusions on the Communication on **“New Skills for New Jobs: anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs”**; and a proposal for a **voluntary framework on quality standards for social services** to modernise legislation on the coordination of migrant workers’ social security.

The Czech Presidency will focus on the practical implementation of **the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs** and of the general principles of flexicurity, putting emphasis on increasing labour market flexibility; on flexible employment relationships and social services, based on the principle of ‘making work pay’; on strengthening motivation for an active approach to reintegration into the labour market; and on enhancing the quality of human resources through the training of adults.

The Presidency will seek a compromise with the European Parliament in a conciliation procedure on the **Working Time Directive**.

The Czech Presidency will focus on the issue of **parental childcare** and its relation to employment policy. The Presidency will propose opening a debate on a possible review of the Barcelona objectives in the field of **pre-school childcare services**. The Presidency will also continue discussing legislative proposals of the European Commission aimed at the reconciliation of work, personal and family life.

The Presidency will organise a conference to discuss **social inclusion** issues and will propose the adoption of the Council conclusions. Attention will also be paid to the improvement of quality, availability and financing of long-term care, protection of the dignity and rights of persons dependent on care, and support for an active, healthy ageing and ageing well.

More generally, 2009 will see continuing debate on the principle of **social innovation**, an approach favoured by the Commission which involves the design and implementation of creative ways of meeting social needs. Examples include new models of childcare, web-based social networks, the delivery of healthcare at home or new ways of encouraging people to use sustainable means of transport. The Commission intends to support social innovation through various programmes, in particular the structural funds, and will encourage the creation of networks for further reflection and the exchange of good practice.