

- As of July this year, Estonia will hold the presidency of the Council of the European Union for the first time.
- The EU needs to act as a team at this time. Only in those circumstances can we come together, successfully tackle all the challenges, and make the most of all the possibilities.
- There is so much more that unites us than divides us. We all want to feel safe, we all want to live well.
- **Our role as the member state holding the presidency is to find a balance between all the views, traditions and interests in Europe today to achieve the best possible outcome for European citizens.**

## 1. An open and innovative European economy

The European economy has to be open and innovative to stay competitive. An economy, whether large or small, can only be successful if it is open – to opportunities, change, trade, and new ideas.

- The single market is one of the EU's greatest assets; the free movement of goods, services, people, and capital benefits us all.
- Regulation must be smart and simple. An economy thrives when the business environment is predictable, clear, and transparent. The spirit of entrepreneurship should not be weighed down by bureaucracy.
- Dynamism needs to be balanced by stability and necessary safeguards – be it in the banking sector, the energy markets, or elsewhere.
- The search for new growth must take into account Europe's traditional strengths, for example our industrial base, and the way we protect our workers.

## 2. A safe and secure Europe

The European Union began as a project of peace. Today, once again, protecting our citizens, and ensuring peace and stability in the world, are items at the top of the EU agenda.

- The migration crisis, international terrorism, and organised crime are all sources of instability and risk. Member states have to be able to trust each other's and the EU's ability to protect its borders.
- Solutions to these challenges include making the financing of terrorism more difficult, facilitating cooperation between police and security forces in different countries, and creating databases and IT solutions that allow for swift exchange of information when needed.
- Our resilience against external threats has to increase. Commitments made regarding military spending need to be fulfilled, our military capabilities strengthened, and the use of military resources better coordinated.
- Nothing can be achieved in isolation. NATO will remain a key partner and strong transatlantic ties continue to be essential.
- It is important to develop existing partnerships further, build new ones, and promote stability and prosperity in the immediate neighbourhood (including through a continued enlargement policy), both to the east, south, Middle East and across Africa.

## 3. A digital Europe and the free movement of data

The future of the world is digital. A prosperous and sustainable Europe embraces technological transformation by boldly seizing the opportunities offered through digitalisation.

- At the same time, rapid change and new technologies always create vulnerabilities: our task will be to balance these risks and benefits fairly.
- The free movement of data is something that concerns all European policy and fundamental freedoms. We need to find ways to ensure that data is used in a secure way for our individual and collective benefit.
- Our presidency will focus on advancing a digital single market, on the increased use of e-solutions and data, and on the development of cross-border e-services.
- A digital society can mean greater engagement, transparency and inclusion, rather than less. We need to seek a sustainable balance between innovation and tradition.

## 4. An inclusive and sustainable Europe

Europe must re-examine the ways in which it can offer equal opportunities for people who want to live and work across the EU, keeping in mind that there is true strength in diversity. We need to adjust to changes in the labour market and in working life.

- Labour mobility within the EU is an opportunity rather than a threat. The term 'equal opportunities' also signifies fair mobility when moving across borders, – the right to go abroad to study, work or stay without being discriminated.
- Natural ecosystems and their vital resources are under pressure from urban sprawl, intensive agriculture, pollution, invasive species and climate change.
- We believe a balance between economic growth and protecting the environment is not only possible, but necessary. The 'circular economy' offers us an opportunity for economic reinvention, bringing improved sustainability and increased competition.
- Technology and nature are not opposites; we can use the first to protect and ease pressure on the latter. We must be smart and do more with fewer resources, reducing waste and increasing recycling.

- The symbol for the Estonian EU Council Presidency contains many stories. The two main ones are the story of the presidency and the story of Estonia.
- The image of balance aptly reflects the role of the presidency – pictured in the centre – uniting and balancing different viewpoints. Today, more than anything, Europe needs unity, in values, ideas and actions. To be able to advance Europe together and take full advantage of all possibilities for development, we must strike a balance between the various opinions, interests and visions amongst the member states. This aim is reflected in the symbol of the Presidency.
- The story of Estonia is depicted in two values. At the base is a connection with nature, at the top is a story of new technologies and ways of living. The aim of finding balance and synergy between natural and man-made, old and new, is our unfolding story.
- The symbol of the presidency is also a modern building block, a fragment of the binary code. All the virtual world, the modern tools and services around us rely on ones and zeroes. This provides us with a reminder to never underestimate the genius of simplicity.

## Our story

### 1. A connection with nature

- Estonia might have a relatively small population, but there are many trees, wild beaches, marshes and islands. Estonians have a special connection with nature, and this is reflected in our everyday life and values.
- A dialogue between the land and the people of this country has been going on for thousands of years – it has shaped our history, our values, our lifestyle, and our way of thinking.
- Unlike in many other cultures, a forest is, for Estonians, a naturally-safe environment that provides peace and protection.
- One can view Estonia as the world's largest spa. The openness, cleanness and the quiet rhythm is relaxing for the mind and promotes clear thinking.
- The sea has always been a door to the world for us. Connections and trading via waterways with other nations has been a natural part of our lives for thousands of years.

#### FACTS:

- Estonia is one of the most forest-rich countries – over 50% of our land is covered with woods, 30% of it is under protection.
- 1/5 of Estonia is covered with bogs that form ancient pristine ecosystems, more than 10 000 years old.
- As regards the proportion of organic farmland, Estonia ranks third in the EU.
- According to World Health Organization reports, Estonian cities are in fourth position when it comes to clean air.
- Estonia has 2222 islands and islets.
- Estonia provides attractive habitat for over 300 species of birds. The record for number of bird species seen in 24 hours in Estonia is 194, making it the second most diverse region after Spain.
- According to legend, the Ancient-Greek seafarer Pytheas reached Estonia 2300 years ago, finding it to be the most remote land (Ulthima Thule).
- Four Estonian cities – Tallinn, Tartu, Pärnu and Viljandi – were part of the Hanseatic League.

### 2. Digital society

- New digital technology makes our everyday life better by leaving more time for the important matters of the day.
- Public digital services and communications allow for a more efficient use of time, money and paper.
- The Estonian experience shows that an e-state and information society can be built without jeopardising security and privacy.
- People of Estonia have access to their data and the possibility to check how the government is using it. Electronic identification tools grant security to individuals and organisations.
- The Estonian ICT sector and an ambitious startup community continue to create innovative e-services ranging from mobile-parking to e-Residency, that not only simplify people's lives in Estonia, but also all over the world.

#### FACTS:

- Estonia is ranked second in the EU for providing quality public digital services.
- There are almost as many active digital IDs as there are people in Estonia – 1.3 million.
- Digital signatures save up to five working days per year for an average Estonian.
- Estonia is a successful exporter of experiences and e-solutions – nearly a third of the countries in the world have benefited from the experiences of Estonia in the information society.
- Estonia ranks first in the EU as regards the use of public digital (e-government) services. 88,4% of the population use the internet daily (among 16-74 year olds).
- Internet freedom in Estonia is among the highest in the world.
- In Estonia, programming, robotics and contemporary technologies are even taught in kindergartens.
- Estonia has more startups per capita than anywhere else in the EU.