On the basis of Article 110 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia Nos. 92/07 – official consolidated text, 105/10 and 80/13) and in connection with the second paragraph of Article 5 of the Cooperation between the National Assembly and the Government in EU Affairs Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia Nos. 34/04, 43/10 and 107/10), the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted, at its session on 23 March 2021, the following

**DECLARATION**

**on Activities of the Republic of Slovenia in EU Institutions for 2021–2024**

*Conscious and respectful of the decision of the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia to join the EU and of the role of the Republic of Slovenia as its member,*

*having regard to the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030, the Declaration on Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia, the Foreign Policy Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia, the EU Strategic Agenda 2019–2024, European Commission priorities for 2019–2024, and the 18-month Trio Presidency Programme of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia for the 2020–2021 period,*

*with this Declaration, the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopts the basic political orientations on strategic issues that Slovenia will face in further decision-making procedures for the adoption of individual legislative acts and other EU documents in the 2020–2024 period. Within its competence, the National Assembly joins the efforts towards implementing the Declaration.*

**European Union – returning to fundamental values**

1. As a unique project of ensuring transnational integration, security, peace, stability, and prosperity on the old continent, the EU is now facing major strategic challenges at the global level, which include the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, new security issues, i.e. cybersecurity, the deliberate publication of fake news and untruths, migratory pressure, demographic change, and Brexit. These processes are radically changing international relations and international security, causing insecurity and, unfortunately, also divisions, and posing a challenge to the European way of life. As a result, the Union must strengthen its foundations and highlight the core values that led to its creation, and thus strengthened, meet new challenges.
2. A staunch advocate of an integrated, inclusive, and strong European Union, Slovenia insists on maintaining and strengthening the Union’s key achievements while striving for its further deepening, where necessary. While respecting the fundamental EU treaties and principles, Slovenia is open to initiatives for closer integration that will make the Union stronger, more effective, and resilient without compromising the preservation and further development of the specific identities and cultures of the Member States.
3. Peace, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, the well-being of all citizens of the Union, subsidiarity, equality of the Member States in respect of their diversity, and their mutual solidarity are the values which Slovenia will defend within all EU institutions and also externally, as part of development cooperation and other multilateral activities.
4. Aware of the Union’s strategic importance, Slovenia desires to contribute constructively to its further strengthening. The stronger and more developed its members, the stronger the EU. Slovenia’s medium-term objective is to join the ranks of the most developed Member States, which would further strengthen the future-oriented common policies and the well-being of its citizens. In this endeavour, Slovenia will liaise with Member States or groups of countries with similar interests and positions on individual policies.

**New impetus for the Union**

1. The times ahead will be marked by the effects of the pandemic – the third crisis the EU has faced in the last decade. This is unprecedented in the history of the European Union and requires a common, decisive, ambitious, and comprehensive response. Consequently, the attention of all Member States, including EU institutions, should be focused on a sustainable recovery that will enhance economic and social convergence in the Union, increase its international competitiveness, generate economic growth, and develop its capacity to respond rapidly to modern challenges.
2. Our efforts will primarily focus on strengthening the capacity and resilience of the critical infrastructure of the Union and its Member States to deal with global crises such as pandemics, economic and financial crises, security crises, including terrorism, cyber, hybrid and information attacks, population ageing or negative demographic trends, migratory pressures, and humanitarian crises.
3. We would like to see the Schengen Area and the internal market fully operational as soon as possible, along with the further strengthening of the Economic and Monetary Union and the enlargement of the euro area. At the same time, an ambitious digital transformation underpinned by increased investment in education, science, research, and innovation is crucial.
4. The Union must not neglect the EU Strategic Agenda 2019–2024 and its four main priorities, as well as the four fundamental freedoms of the single market, i.e. protecting citizens and freedoms; developing a strong and vibrant economic base; building a climate-neutral, green, fair, and social Europe; and promoting European interests and values on the global stage.
5. This must be followed by effective and sufficiently flexible implementation of the ambitious 2021–2027 EU Multiannual Financial Framework and a new recovery instrument, Next Generation EU.
6. The adopted legislative acts, the political arrangements, or the strategic and other Union documents are of no real value in this respect unless there is consistency between their objectives and measures, and they must be followed by implementation and control. To maximize effectiveness, it is also necessary, with full respect and implementation of the EU acquis, to reduce unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles, promote integrity and corruption prevention,ensure effective digital transformation, strengthen the already improved legislation, and make the legislative process more transparent as regards the functioning of public institutions and their procedures. More consistent support for impact assessments of legislative proposals, including the use of innovative methods and tools in the legislative process, is required. Key stakeholders should be involved to create better and more lasting end-user-centred solutions.
7. Therefore, thorough reflection is needed on how to improve the effectiveness of the EU’s functioning, promote its fundamental values, and develop its future image, and it is precisely this that the Conference on the Future of Europe is all about. It must be implemented democratically and ambitiously, with sufficient realism and effectiveness that the solutions adopted can be implemented in a timely manner. It is essential that the democratic and legitimate debates on the future of the Union, on increasing confidence in its institutions, promoting active citizenship, and strengthening the European way of life involve national parliaments as well as EU citizens.

**Six priority action areas for Slovenia**

1. As part of the current legislative cycle of the EU institutions for 2019–2024, Slovenia is focused on: (i) sustainable recovery and stability of the economy, (ii) strengthening economic and social cohesion in the Union; (iii) protecting citizens and their freedoms, including strengthening the resilience of the Union and its members to crises; (iv) promoting the Union’s interests and values in the neighbourhood and the world and continuing the enlargement process; (v) strengthening the common foreign policy and deepening transatlantic ties; and (vi) increasing the effectiveness of the Union’s functioning.

*1. Sustainable economic recovery*

1. Rebooting the European economy is an opportunity to consolidate Europe’s stability, resilience, and prosperity and to enhance its role on the global stage. This can only be achieved if, considering economic, social, and global demographic changes, we succeed in securing sustainable and inclusive growth in the long term and increase the cohesion of the European area. Therefore, the strengthening of the European economy and its competitiveness must be based on completing the single market, strengthening the industrial base, and exploiting the potential offered by new technologies, digital and green transformation, and the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights.
2. A strong economic and monetary union is a key element in ensuring the stability, prosperity, and competitiveness of the European economy. It is therefore vital that all Member States continue with the necessary structural reforms towards greater economic convergence in order to further enhance the Economic and Monetary Union in this legislative cycle. This would increase the resilience of the European economy and ensure that a stable euro is a currency of global importance. Slovenia is a staunch supporter of efforts to further develop the Economic and Monetary Union and strengthen its resilience.
3. As a Member State with a highly export-oriented economy, Slovenia firmly advocates strengthening the internal market and its symmetrical deepening in the domains of all four freedoms. It is necessary to continue to remove obstacles that hamper the full functioning of the internal market. The regulatory framework should preclude the risk of economically stronger members addressing their own domestic situations in individual services and on the labour market to the detriment of other Member States. The internal market must enable harmonious, sustainable development in all Member States, which requires the removal of controls at internal Schengen borders and further liberalisation of cross-border provision of services as soon as possible. Special attention should also be devoted to ensuring sustainable supply chains and ongoing support for entrepreneurship, including a high level of consumer protection.
4. The recovery and modernisation of the European economy must be based on respect for the principles of a free social market economy. An ambitious approach is required to increase the competitiveness of the economy, create new jobs and support investment activities. Particular attention will be devoted to protecting water resources and access to drinking water, sustainable forest management and biodiversity, health, quality of living and food safety, and self-sufficiency in waste disposal.
5. In Slovenia, safe and efficient transport connections supported by intelligent transport systems are paramount for the functioning of the internal market and for ensuring economic growth, which is partly due to geographical location. As a result, we support the transition to smart and digitalised sustainable mobility, which, among other benefits, means that most freight transport is moved to the railways, and that a sufficient supply of sustainable alternative engine fuels is ensured. Measures under the Single European Sky will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. Slovenia is also committed to improving the integration into the trans-European core network TEN-T and enhancing integration with Central European countries.
6. The Union needs a fully integrated and well-functioning European energy market that reliably delivers sustainable, secure, and affordable energy while respecting the right of Member States to lay down the conditions for exploiting their own energy resources and defining the structure of their energy supply. In this regard, increasing energy efficiency, diversifying resources, and investing in green solutions for a mobile future are particularly important to Slovenia.
7. Strong and forward-looking industry is key to economic recovery and a stronger internal market. The digitalisation of industry, personnel training, and access to the latest and innovative technologies with a focus on green development are essential in this regard. Increasing the global competitiveness of European industry and reducing its dependence on third countries demands the strengthening and diversifying of strategic production by promoting strategic value chains. In this context, it is particularly important for Slovenia to strengthen small and medium-sized enterprises as the backbone of the economy, to ensure their access to value chains and markets, and to enhance cultural and creative industries as generators of added value.
8. Investment in digital transformation needs to be increased to strengthen both the competitiveness of the European economy and society’s willingness to face modern challenges. Therefore, in addition to providing adequate financial support, it is vital to complete the Digital Single Market as soon as possible. For Slovenia, good connectivity and equal access to digital services and competences for all citizens of the Union, along with appropriate working conditions and the development of artificial intelligence, are essential as the latter can significantly enhance the competitiveness of the economy and help overcome the challenges of an ageing society. In this context, Europe must ensure its digital sovereignty, a level playing field for intellectual property, and resilience to cyber and hybrid threats without delay. It must also ensure permanent activity in the global digital space and set up appropriate security standards for core and periphery telecommunication networks’ equipment suppliers in line with the so-called 5G tool shop and the development of an appropriate pan-European certification scheme. The transition to a digital society must preserve the fundamental values leading to the establishment of the EU, especially human rights and freedoms. Slovenia will continue to support a secure, global, open, and free web and cyberspace in general.
9. Increased investment in education, research, and innovation and their contribution to sustainable solutions for everyday life are important elements of the green and digital transition. Slovenia supports changing the development model of the European Research Area towards greater usability, connectivity, and enhanced cooperation to make better use of the EU’s potential.
10. Ensuring food security and investing in modernisation and rural development is crucial for independent and sustainable European agriculture. Slovenia pays particular attention to small and family farms and the sustainable production of safe and quality food. It supports the strengthening of sustainable and multifunctional forest management and the conservation and sustainable management of fisheries resources while striving to consider the specific and traditional characteristics of Slovenian fisheries in the Adriatic Sea.

*2. Strengthening economic and social cohesion in the Union*

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened the disparities in the economic and social cohesion of the European continent; as a result, solidarity and a fair exit from the crisis are crucial. In the recovery process, Slovenia pays particular attention to the effective and flexible implementation of the modern European cohesion policy and the Next Generation EU recovery instrument. Both contribute significantly to the positive convergence of the European area, strengthening the resilience of the economy and productivity, creating high added-value jobs, tackling the challenges of an ageing society, facilitating sustainable integration of vulnerable groups, and creating development opportunities for young people.
2. When designing and financing common policies, due attention should also be devoted to culture, cultural heritage, education, training, youth, and sport as key elements in building an advanced, inclusive, cohesive, pluralistic, and knowledge-based society and in promoting European values and ways of life. Slovenia therefore welcomes the initiative to establish a European Education Area aimed at strengthening the education systems of the Member States, which must cope with technological and social change while at the same time raising the awareness of the importance of the community and the European identity.
3. When addressing common challenges, account must also be taken of the identity and specificities of individual Member States, building on the fundamental European principle of subsidiarity. Demographic trends as the greatest strategic internal challenge need to be tackled effectively, thus creating the conditions for a responsive labour market while taking full account of social dialogue and family support.
4. The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the EU’s need for enhanced cooperation and greater resilience in the field of health. Slovenia considers that health must remain high on the Union’s political agenda and would like to see greater synergy of health policy with other Union policies. In this context, it advocates efforts to ensure regular coordination at the EU level and proposes the development of a European health strategy, including enhanced cooperation between national health organisations, which would increase the Union’s sovereignty and resilience in this area and improve access of citizens to high quality and safe health care. It supports the building of a European Health Union and calls for the development of European pandemic preparedness plans and the establishment of common strategic stocks of medicines, vaccines, medical products, and personal protective equipment as an important element of EU crisis management. In Slovenia’s view, it is also essential to ensure the necessary production capacities of critical medical supplies in the Member States and the EU’s immediate neighbourhood.

*3. Protecting citizens and their freedoms*

1. The European Union is founded on values such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights. Slovenia supports efforts to protect and promote these values, with a special focus on promoting and strengthening the European way of life.
2. A staunch advocate of the rule of law, Slovenia strives towards an impartial, non-political, and objective assessment of respect for the rule of law. The mechanism for monitoring the rule of law in the European Union and a preventive instrument for strengthening and respecting the principle of the rule of law, with special focus on the independence and impartiality of the judiciary in the Member States, must be objective and transparent and respect the principle of equal treatment of all Member States while taking into account the specific historical context of the Member States. The latter dictates a different approach and measures to strengthen the rule of law for each of them.
3. The unpredictable situation around the world requires greater internal and external security of the Union. This, in turn, requires the right balance between the security of EU citizens on the one hand, and the guaranteeing of their rights and freedoms, on the other.
4. Slovenia supports enhancing cooperation within the Union on police and judicial cooperation, including security and intelligence agencies, as well as other initiatives aimed at a genuine European Security Union. This is an important element in the fight against organised crime, hybrid and cyber threats, terrorism, and various forms of radicalism.
5. Ongoing activity in the digital domain and ensuring the resilience of its critical infrastructure must also be a priority. Developing standardised operational procedures for cases of informational and hybrid attacks is crucial not only for the security and privacy of citizens, the protection of democratic processes and institutions and for ensuring freedom of speech, but also for European security, the security of critical infrastructure, including 5G, and the effective transition to a digital society throughout the Union’s territory.
6. The European Union needs a more comprehensive, effective, and ambitious approach to crisis management. To improve collective responsiveness of the Union in crisis situations, Slovenia supports enhanced cooperation between Member States and EU institutions in this regard, along with the upgrading of the EU functioning. In this context, Slovenia supports efforts to establish a broad-based strategic foresight system for the Union.
7. The Union must continue to strengthen its resilience to natural and other disasters. Slovenia supports enhanced cooperation and solidarity between Member States and EU institutions in this area, including further strengthening of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and establishing common strategic reserve capacities. In this context, it is crucial that the Union supports and complements Member States’ activities towards adequate prevention, preparedness, and response, and promotes rapid and effective operational cooperation in the event of disasters.
8. Slovenia remains a vocal advocate of a fully functioning Schengen Area and the integrity of its operating rules. The first step in this regard would be to consolidate the Schengen Area in its current scope, and the second its enlargement, so that the EU’s external borders will also be the external borders of the Schengen Area. The free movement of people, goods, capital, and services is a European public good that must be respected and developed.
9. Effective protection of external borders is one of the key elements in ensuring security in the EU’s territory and facilitating the smooth functioning of the single market. Slovenia is positively inclined to the strengthening of the European Border and Coast Guard.
10. The Union urgently needs a new deal on an effective migration and asylum policy, enabling it to respond in a predictable and timely manner to crisis situations, to tackle more vigorously illegal migration, trafficking in human beings and abuse of the rules of the asylum system, and to ensure more effective returns to countries of origin. In this context, reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is essential, especially in the event of disproportionate migratory pressures on the most vulnerable Member States. The Union must also be able to actively assist the countries of its neighbourhood facing the pressures of mass migration.
11. Slovenia is an advocate for strengthened cooperation on EU security and defence. It supports increased activity as part of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European defence industry and the technological base, and the effective functioning of the European Peace Facility. To ensure peace and stability, the civilian aspects of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) need to be strengthened by developing capabilities and operational preparedness. Slovenia supports strengthened EU-NATO partnership. In this context, military mobility is of particular importance.

*4. Promoting the Union’s interests and values in the neighbourhood and the world and continuing the enlargement process*

1. For Slovenia, it is crucial that the EU continues to pay particular attention to its immediate neighbourhood, the Eastern Partnership countries, the Mediterranean region, and the Western Balkan countries that have EU membership prospects. Slovenia supports the enlargement process and the accession of the Western Balkan countries to the EU, actively encouraging the countries of the region to undertake the necessary reforms and make every effort to meet the requirements for EU membership. At the same time, Slovenia also encourages the Union to actively contribute to achieving this common objective and to respect its commitments. The revised methodology of the enlargement negotiations renders this process more effective and credible. In view of the strategic importance of the development and stability in our neighbourhood, it is imperative for the countries of the region to find and implement binding solutions to bilateral disputes and the past outstanding issues in accordance with international law, including the Agreement on Succession Issues. Measures to bridge the development gap between the European Union and the Western Balkan countries and ensure positive prospects for young people in the region are crucial. Strengthening the rule of law in the candidate countries is therefore essential.

*5. Strengthening the common foreign policy and deepening transatlantic ties*

1. The global balance is shifting towards a multipolar world, which requires a united and decisive response by the European Union to the global situation. It must act strategically, strengthen its unity and the ability to represent its interests autonomously, defend its values, principles, and standards and effectively promote them at the global level. It must firmly defend effective multilateralism and a global order based on international law, promote its fundamental values and act for the well-being and dignity of all people, eradication of poverty, sustainable development, and respect for human rights. We therefore need a more effective Common Foreign and Security Policy, one based on coordinated and proactive action, especially vis-à-vis the major global players. Slovenia advocates the strengthening of effective arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons as key pillars of global peace and security.
2. The EU needs an open, ambitious, sustainable, and rules-based trade policy that opposes different forms of protectionism and, while maintaining already achieved European and international standards, advocates a level playing field and acts in the interest of its citizens. An effective multilateral trading system, strategic partnerships, ambitious trade and investment agreements and effective implementation of measures must be key components of the common commercial policy.We support a trade deal with the US.
3. The Union’s proactive approach to preventing and resolving crises and conflicts is an essential element in tackling the growing problem of mass migration at the EU’s external borders. Slovenia underlines the importance of strengthening development cooperation and humanitarian aid, while Union policies should be applied to systematically address the root causes of migration in the countries of origin.
4. One of the priorities remains the continuation of the EU’s comprehensive engagement with the US and Canada, transatlantic allies linked through friendship, partnership, history, and a common, western civilisation, who also share values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy and the rule of law, along with several common interests. Slovenia will seek to improve the possibilities for an effective collective response to common security and defence challenges, including new challenges and threats, with cooperation in the cyber domain particularly urgent. We will also support enhanced transatlantic cooperation in the context of the further development of various multilateral initiatives such as the Three Seas Initiative.
5. Dialogue with other EU partners will continue. In this context, awareness of the need to maintain cooperation in all areas of mutual interest, including mutual exchanges on topical international issues, remains crucial. Slovenia supports the EU’s regular political dialogue with the Russian Federation and China. We will work towards an even closer EU relationship with Asian partner democracies, including the Republic of Korea, Japan, and India. We will also support the further development of the EU’s partnership and cooperation with partners in Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America.

*6. More effective functioning of the Union*

1. Stronger and more effective responsiveness of the Union to the changing circumstances in Europe and the world requires increased effectiveness of EU action.
2. Slovenia supports increased effectiveness of EU institutions under the existing fundamental treaties. Amending them would only be acceptable if this proved necessary for improving the Union’s functioning in specific areas. The Conference on the Future of Europe is also viewed in this light – seeking more effective ways for EU functioning.
3. Improving the decision-making process is an important element in making the EU institutions work more effectively. Such improvements are welcome; however, it is crucial that they preserve the necessary independence of the EU institutions, that they formally and effectively uphold the principle of equal treatment of all Member States, regardless of their size, that they respect the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, and proportionality, that they preserve the necessary democracy and transparency of the process and that they do not compromise the necessary inter-institutional balance.
4. Slovenia is cautious about the potential extension of the qualified majority decision-making system, as it defends the view that any new arrangements should always provide for an appropriate mechanism to take into account and safeguard the strategic interests of small Member States. This is essential in the context of strengthening mutual trust, which is a prerequisite for improving effectiveness. Therefore, when formulating policies and identifying common interests, we will strive to ensure that the Union always builds on a prior understanding of the specific situation and vital interests of each Member State and on mutual solidarity.

**Second Presidency of the Council of the EU**

1. By intensifying its engagement in EU institutions and working even more actively with other Member States, Slovenia is determined to further contribute to the formulation, adoption, and implementation of common policies, building trust in the EU institutions and promoting the Union and its values.
2. This is particularly true for the duration of the EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2021. Slovenia intends to carry out its task responsibly, effectively, impartially and in a spirit of good cooperation and commitment to the European idea. The National Assembly plays an important role in this national project. The Presidency is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the capacity for constructive engagement of all stakeholders in Slovenia with a view to successfully implementing the Presidency project, which is in the interests of both Slovenia and the EU at large.
3. At the same time, the Presidency provides an opportunity for enhanced promotion of Slovenian culture and lifestyles, cultural heritage, scientific achievements, creativity and innovation in other fields, natural heritage, tourism, and culinary achievements, both domestically and internationally.
4. Slovenia will also continue to strengthen its position in EU institutions and foster cooperation between its representatives in these and domestic institutions, as well as ensuring a consistent and effective representation of its own interests in EU institutions.
5. The Slovenian EU Council Presidency will build on the EU Strategic Agenda 2019–2024, the 18-month Trio Presidency Programme of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia for the 2020–2021 period, and the Slovenian Presidency priorities for the second half of 2021. Emphasis will be placed on the EU’s preparedness and response to crisis situations arising from pandemics and cyber threats, which can only be tackled through sustained action in this area.