

# Cyprus at the Helm of the EU

On 1 July 2012 Cyprus assumed for the first time the six-month Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The Cyprus Presidency was committed from the start to making every possible effort to work *Towards a Better Europe*, closer to its citizens and the world, and to promote European integration. In this context, four priorities were set: a) one Europe, more effective and viable, b) one Europe, with a more efficient economy, based on growth, c) one Europe that will mean more for its citizens, with solidarity and social cohesion and d) a Europe in the world and closer to its neighbours.

Taking into consideration the socioeconomic situation in the EU, there was a readjusting of the priorities of the Cyprus Presidency depending on the current political and economic developments. The primary goal was the continuation and reinforcement of the joint effort to exit from the economic and social crisis and the return to the track of stable and energetic development and job creation in the EU, while at the same time securing social cohesion, combined with fiscal reform and stability. The basic values and principles of the EU, especially solidarity, were the springboard for all actions.

Milestones of the Presidency were the historic agreement reached with the European Parliament on the Unitary Patent Package and the agreement in the Council of the EU on the Single Supervising Mechanism. The Presidency made strong efforts to advance negotiations on the Multiannual Financial

Framework, leading the issue to a level of maturity, preparing the ground for the President of the European Council and the Heads of state and government so as to come closer to reaching an agreement.

Furthermore, significant progress was achieved on the issue of the Common European Asylum System.

Acting as an honest broker, a remarkable achievement of the Cyprus Presidency was resolving the inter-institutional crisis that emerged in June 2012, between the European Parliament and the Council, on the issue of the Schengen zone. Aiming at deepening the Internal Market, the Cyprus Presidency achieved substantial progress in all the remaining actions of the Single Market Act I, completing five of them. The timely agreement on the EU Budget for 2013, as well as the Amending Budgets for 2012, made it possible for the Union to implement many programmes and actions to the benefit of its citizens as from the beginning of the following year. In addition, another important success of the Cyprus Presidency was the reactivation of the Integrated *Maritime Policy* of the *European Union* through the "Limassol Declaration".