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## EUROPEAN UNION POLICIES & PRIORITIES 2008

EDITOR MAURICE FRASER

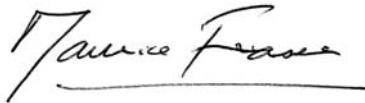
**T**he Lisbon Treaty is signed. The relief of EU leaders is palpable. Ratification will take time, and may not be smooth or seamless – not least in Britain. But for now the spotlight moves away from institutions and procedures, towards policies and outputs which make a difference to ordinary people – and which the EU is uniquely equipped to deliver.

Slovenia's Presidency of the EU, to June 30, will be a first for one of the Union's newest members. Small country presidencies have a good track record of competence and pragmatism. In that spirit, Slovene Prime Minister Janez Janša places the accent in his foreword on productive synergies and effective implementation.

The second half of 2008 sees France take over the EU's reins. French diplomacy has recovered its energy and élan since the rude shock of the referendum 'non' in 2005 and the election of Nicolas Sarkozy. We can look forward to initiatives on a number of dossiers – including reform of the CAP – as France's Europe Minister, Jean-Pierre Jouyet, suggests in his article.

The challenges facing the EU are legion, with climate change and energy policy reconfirmed at the top of the agenda post-Bali. The issues of migration and security will continue to loom large. On the EU's south-eastern doorstep, political will and effective strategies will be imperative if the EU is to deploy its soft power constructively, both in the western Balkans and in the context of Turkey's accession negotiations – to say nothing of the challenge to the Union's cohesion posed by Kosovo's anticipated declaration of independence. Meanwhile, Darfur and Iran will demand a serious and concerted EU response.

With a potentially far-reaching review of its budget under way, question marks over much-needed economic reforms in the Member States, and the risk of continued instability in world financial markets, 2008 has the makings of a testing year in the life of the Union. As Commission President José Manuel Barroso makes clear in his foreword, the EU cannot simply build on the status quo – it must be a vehicle for change. Let us hope he is right.



Editor

December 2007

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