

CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS

Czech Presidency in the Context of Cooperation of the French-Czech-Swedish Trio: Challenges and Opportunities

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OPENING REMARKS

The conference was opened by the Ambassador of Sweden to the Czech Republic, Ms. Catherine von Heidenstam and the Ambassador of France to the Czech Republic, Mr. Charles Fries, who shared their remarks on the performance and the level of cooperation of the French-Czech-Swedish trio of presidencies.

According to Ambassador Charles Fries, the cooperation which started in September 2007 with preparatory work on the joint 18-month program, a common road map of the trio, was successful. Ambassador Fries underlined that the succession of EU presidencies created a new atmosphere and brought an opportunity for stronger cooperation at all levels of Czech-French bilateral relations. He also stressed that the relationship between Prague and Paris has never been so intense since the Velvet revolution in 1989.

Ambassador Fries also referred to the issues which had been creating some tensions between France and the Czech Republic – the design of the European economic recovery plan, the understanding of the role of Eurozone in the current situation of economic crisis, and the controversy concerning the so called return of protectionism to Europe. In his opinion, the whole situation had been very exaggerated by the media. Although there might have been tensions between political leaders, the cooperation at working level was very close and effective. He pointed out that there were many points of convergence which were regrettably not so often mentioned by the media despite their considerable importance. Ambassador Fries also gave examples of a very similar perception of such issues as energy policy, migration, competitiveness, and transatlantic relations. There was practically the same vision concerning future of Western Balkans or convergence in the sphere of human rights.

The position of Czech Presidency (CZ PRES) was also strongly influenced by domestic issues, especially by the fall of the Czech government mid-way through the presidency period. Ambassador Fries stated that this situation was very delicate for the Czech Republic as well as for its European partners. Regardless of the turbulent events on the Czech domestic political scene, the presidency was still expected to demonstrate stability, leadership and capacity to launch initiatives. The successful summit in June was a sign that the situation was, in the end, well-handled.

Ambassador Fries concluded that a successful presidency is a well organised presidency. In these terms, CZ PRES was managed „in a very professional spirit“. Also the objectives set by the Presidency have been met. Among the main successes of CZ PRES, he mentioned the negotiation of a common EU position for the G20 summit, activities in the field of energy security such as promotion of the Southern Corridor, the launch of the Eastern Partnership and the last European summit under CZ PRES where the Irish guarantees and the political designation of Mr. Barroso as president of the next European Commission had been agreed.

Swedish Ambassador von Heidenstam confirmed that CZ PRES „had its job well done“ and does not deserve criticism. She underlined that the presidency had to manage a wide range of very complex issues including several international crises: no matter how much you plan, she said, there would always be unforeseen issues that have to be dealt with. The Czech Republic had its fair share of these.

Ambassador von Heidenstam was pleased that the cooperation between the Czech Republic and Sweden has been very efficient. She identified many topics where approaches of the two countries converged well. For instance, she mentioned the originally Swedish-Polish initiative of Eastern Partnership which the Czech Republic promoted as one of its major priorities. On the other hand, Sweden would have appreciated a more active approach of CZ PRES in the field of environment. Although energy belonged to the priority topics of CZ PRES, the Czechs put emphasis on the aspect of energy security. Sweden, on the other hand, focuses more on the environmental aspects and issues related to climate change.

PANEL I - ECONOMY

The first panel session chaired by Charles Grant, Director of Centre for European Reform, focused on one of the key priorities of CZ PRES which is also the key topic in current global issues: the economic development.

Mr. Grant opened the panel by stating that the economic crisis is the topic where we should especially look beyond the presidencies and see the problem in its wider context. According to him, it is the strong single market that is the key to the success of the EU. It is crucial for Europe's weight in the world how successful the European economy is and whether the EU is seen as successful. At the moment, however, the European Union economy seems to be gently declining compared to other, more dynamic parts of the world. This inevitably damages European soft power and its influence in the world. In the time of crisis, Europe needs to preserve and strengthen its single market in order to sustain and enhance its power.

This is one of the fields where CZ PRES was very active. According to Mr. Grant, the so called Lisbon agenda, on which CZ PRES put a lot of emphasis, might seem boring compared to other topical issues, it is extremely important though as it promotes economic reform for dynamic and efficient European economy. The strategy, which includes a list of worthy objectives, has achieved some progress, (e.g. the employment rate). Yet, since the most of the reforms require action from national governments, the strategy as such has rather failed. Liberalisation has been blocked for example in Southern Europe and some of the Central and Eastern Europe countries.

Mr. Grant further argued that when the economic crisis arrived, liberalism and Anglo-Saxon capitalism had become „dirty words“. In his opinion, this perspective can further damage the reform agenda in Europe which has been perceived as tailored by the Anglo-Saxon model. At the time being, all across the world the public opinion is less in favour of globalisation, deregulation, and immigration. The same holds for the EU approach to its enlargement. This is a particular problem the two most important countries of the EU, France and Germany, where the public opinion had shifted to the left from economic liberalism. Mr. Grant claimed that President Sarkozy and Chancellor Merkel have reflected the shift. To keep their popularity they have adopted policies that only a few years ago would have been seen as socialist in terms of using the state to solve the economic problems.

Mr. Grant concluded his speech by pointing out that anti-liberal economic trend can be observed across the whole world. For long, the United Kingdom had been seen as a motor of liberalism in the EU. Now, however, the British influence is declining with the very eurosceptic conservative party expected to win the next parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom. This poses a key test not only to the presidencies, but to the whole European Union.

The next to take the floor was Professor Michal Mejstřík, Director of Institute of Economic Studies of Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University in Prague. He agreed with the need to understand the current situation in its full context and discuss what Europe we are actually in. He underlined that we are observing not only a transfer of wealth, but also a shift of power in the world. The situation is changing day by day with new economic powers growing, posing new challenges to old markets, including Europe.

Unfortunately, Europe is more occupied with its own local interests and domestic problems. To illustrate the issue, Michal Mejstřík gave an example of the economic packages EU governments have introduced in order to stimulate the economy in these difficult times. These packages are still based on national platforms and – as professor Mejstřík stated – in 17 out of 27 countries there had been protectionist features observed despite the fact that under CZ PRES member states unanimously declared that protectionism is not acceptable.

Professor Mejstřík reminded the audience that the Czech Presidency was fighting heavily to push forward „Europe without barriers“, to reach a stronger and bigger single market. He considered this activity successful. On the other hand, Michal Mejstřík was rather sceptical about the progress of the Lisbon strategy as such. In his opinion, the strategy had not been successful prior to the crisis and the current packages are blocking the changes even further.

The third panellist, Jean-François Jamet from Sciences-Po, pointed out that Europe is facing a collective action dilemma. Member states want to protect and at the same time not to restrict, invest in packages but also benefit from packages of other member states. This is an extremely difficult situation. Nonetheless Mr. Jamet argued that protection measures in Europe had not gone too far thanks to the existing European solidarity.

Mr. Jamet also warned that coordination of approaches does not mean that one size should fit all. Tensions regarding individual approaches of various member states are, according to him, mostly a matter of communication. In order to prevent further misunderstanding, the EU member states need to collectively agree on what the situation actually is, what has to be done in the member states, how these measures should be practically implemented and last but not least, how the whole situation should be communicated to European partners. He also proposed to look back at the last two years and identify both successes and mistakes. Some coordination tools have already shown their efficiency and these need to be strengthened, for example the Eurozone. On the other hand, the existing criteria for Eurozone membership do not correspond to the current economic situation. We should think about how to help new member states join.

In conclusion Mr. Jamet stressed that we should not waste the opportunity given by the crisis. It has built a momentum for coordination and we should use this particular situation to improve European governance and thus the dynamics of European integration as such.

In the following discussion, Mr. Karel Dyba, Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the OECD, agreed with Mr. Grant's point that the single market is the most precious public good we have in Europe and its protection and development is the basis of European strength. He also claimed that in his view one of the key tasks of the current European economy is to preserve competition.

Mr. Christian Lequesne, Director of Centre for International Studies and Research, followed the discussion stating that we are still in a world where we oppose liberalism to protections, liberalism to socialism, and market to protection. He did not agree with this approach. In his opinion, we can have liberalism with a certain number of regulations – and this should be the point for the debate of today. We should also focus on what lessons we can learn from the crisis: What was the problem in the bank system? What was actually the problem of credits? Mr. Lequesne was convinced that it was clearly the lack of regulation. He concluded his comment by saying that market does not exist as such – it always operates in social and institutional context. We should be therefore liberal without neglecting institutional regulations.

Mr. Jamet confirmed this statement by saying that in the 21st century, we are not in a debate between pure liberalism and pure etatism. We have to build together at the European level a new consensus how to define a new approach. The Lisbon agenda is a great opportunity to do that.

Mr. Antonio Missiroli from the European Policy Centre in Brussels referred to Mr. Grant's presentation pointing out the difference between political rhetoric and actual policies in Europe. He remarked that it is interesting to observe how leaders talk to domestic audience. Not only in France or Germany due to long election campaign, but surprisingly also in Great Britain where Gordon Brown asks for „British jobs to British workers“. These statements are, however, not followed when it comes to actions and shaping of policies.

Mr. Missiroli also referred to the concerns of the previous speakers regarding „protection of single market as we know it“. He considered this approach very defensive. According to his opinion, the agenda has changed in the last years. Instead of protecting the whole market we should identify industry sectors which are too weak and vulnerable (the market alone cannot generate such protection) and which do not have resources to grow as it would be necessary (e.g. research and development). We should focus on these sectors in the follow-up of the Lisbon strategy.

Mr. Mejstřík agreed with this point stating that helping every single sector of economy is impossible because it would simply block further development. He pointed out that while defining the new common approach we have to be honest and remember that there is an overcapacity in car industry in Europe.

Mr. Grant concluded the session by regretting that European leaders do not believe in single market. This is a major problem because it is the single market and common trade policy what gives EU its credibility. If we took these two aspects away, EU would be finished in terms of its power and prestige.

PANEL II – ENERGY

This panel was chaired by Mr. Jan Žižka from E15 Economic Daily who started his presentation with a reference to a research paper on CZ PRES prepared by a Polish researcher Agnieszka Lada. He stressed that the perception of CZ PRES in Poland and other new member states was much more positive than in some Western Europe countries. He believed that this was due to better compliance of Czech priorities with those of Poland and of new member states in general, especially in the field of energy where the major emphasis was put on energy security. In other fields, Eastern partnership is a good example, which was originally a joint Swedish-Polish initiative.

Mr. Žižka further referred to the key topics and milestones of CZ PRES in the first half of 2009. After successfully managing the January gas crisis, the Czechs have heavily invested in promoting a very complex discussion in the EU regarding diversification of energy supply. The question to be answered was: shall we diversify only resources or also the way they are brought to Europe? Although CZ PRES had succeeded in ensuring the needed initial funding for the Nabucco project, it is not clear if and how the project will continue. Mr. Žižka stressed that despite the evident progress of the debate and strong presentation of CZ PRES in this issue, there is no final conclusion. This means that the issue remains open and the European debate continues.

On the other hand, there was rather critical evaluation of CZ PRES concerning its actions in climate change agenda. Despite having a green party as part of the Czech coalition government, CZ PRES was allegedly not very active in this field. In Mr. Žižka's view, climate change was not completely underestimated, it was, however, also not very actively promoted – at least in comparison with the issue of energy security.

This was confirmed by Mr. Pavel Šolc from Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic. The issue of energy security was a flagship of the CZ PRES, and in terms of number and importance of energy-related documents adopted, the Presidency was very productive.

Mr. Šolc agreed with Mr. Žižka's statement that the gas crisis was a very important moment and many crucial questions were raised in the debate which followed. The need for a common European energy policy was reiterated. Such a common policy should be based on single voice, solidarity, decreasing of energy dependency, critical evaluation of new energy related projects and also on a common emergency procedure. According to Mr. Šolc, another crisis may come in winter and the Swedish Presidency will have to handle it.

He also pointed out another very complex issue stressed during CZ PRES– the need of unbundling progress in the sectors of gas and electricity. There are more possible approaches how to tackle this issue. One of the most important questions is about the role of regulators. This remains an open question also after CZ PRES.

Mr. Mats Braun from the Institute of International Relations in Prague also agreed that energy was clearly one of the most important fields for CZ PRES. However, he pointed out an interesting paradox in the behaviour of Czech politicians: If one of the Czech priorities is energy and the Lisbon Treaty establishes energy as a field of shared competence between member states and the EU and is thus a bridge for further harmonisation of the market, why are the Czechs opposing the ratification of the Treaty?

Mr. Braun also elaborated further on what Swedish Ambassador von Heidenstam said in her opening remarks. There is a different understanding of the term „energy“ in Sweden and in the Czech Republic. In the Czech Republic it is automatically linked to energy security and therefore automatically linked to Russia.

In Sweden, in contrast, the term is strongly related to climate change, renewables and environmental impact of energy policy. It is logically extremely difficult to put these very different perspectives together. And this can also explain why the expectations of the two countries regarding the topic of energy are different. The Swedish approach can be demonstrated by the example of the so called „20/20/20 deal“.¹ Swedish

¹ The plan, agreed at a Brussels summit in December 2008, sets out how 27 member-countries will cut carbon emissions by 20% by 2020, compared with 1990 levels.

goals are much more ambitious than the currently set targets on the European level, Sweden aiming at a 40% cut of emissions or a 50% share of renewable resources in the energy mix. Still, this does not seem to be enough for the political opposition in Sweden who even criticises the government for not being ambitious enough.

Mr. Braun concluded that the outcome of CZ PRES in the field of energy was very good with the exception of climate. In his view, Czechs were simply too passive. This could be given by two factors: First, the role of President Václav Klaus and his opinions which have been undermining the position of the Czech government. Second, a strategy was chosen where it were the French and Swedish presidency who should play the dominant role, especially with the Swedish concentrating fully on the conclusion of negotiations in Copenhagen.

Opening the discussion, Mr. Karel Dyba, Ambassador of the Czech Republic to OECD, confirmed that there is some kind of „obsession“ with Russians in the Czech Republic. He agreed that CZ PRES was not particularly enthusiastic about environment – which in a way reflects the opinion of the Czech public.

Mr. Braun confirmed this statement by adding that Czech public is rather reluctant in this sense and environment is obviously not an issue with which one could win elections. There is clearly more scepticism about eco-friendly economy in the Czech Republic than in Sweden.

Mr. Dyba continued by reminding other participants that CZ PRES focused also on energy efficiency which in terms of environment can be considered as a good contribution.

Mr. Žižka stated that the former Minister of the Environment, Martin Bursík, was very ambitious in questions related to environment before CZ PRES started. However, the focus of CZ PRES shaped differently in the end, given by interests of the Czech Republic and also by the events that occurred during the period. The issue was in all cases heavily influenced by the way Czechs think about Russians.

Regarding the second issue raised in the debate, Mr. Žižka concluded that Czechs do not see Russians as potential partners. There are some opinions in the current Czech discussion that a potential presence of Russians in the Czech market could actually stabilise the supply, on the other hand though, dependence on Russia is still seen as dangerous.

PANEL III – TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

Referring to the title of the panel, Mary Thompson-Jones, Chargé d'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Prague, stated that the relation between the US and Europe has always been an emotional one and the use of terms „euphoria“ and „disenchantment“ in the title of the panel certainly reflected the life at the American embassy in Prague in the last few weeks. Anyone who has worked on EU-US relations can associate the title with the drama of the relationship – at its best being often euphoric and at its worst disenchanting. This is not a solid basis for a relationship and it does really not reflect the longevity and the reality of the EU-US relationship over time which goes back to the European Coal and Steel Community. The problem with relationships containing too much euphoria or too much disenchantment is that they are not sustainable.

Ms. Thompson-Jones gave examples of two policy issues demonstrating these two sides of the relationship: On one hand, she mentioned climate change. Until recently, the US has not been partner with the EU on climate change - it took a change of the US administration to alter the American approach. On the other hand, she referred to the disappointment concerning the issue of the radar in the Czech Republic and the project of missile defence which affected not only the Czechs but also the Poles.

Despite the latest disappointments, she underlined that the EU-US relationship should not be seen only

through the security perspective. The economic issues, education or foreign policy are examples of a successful long-term cooperation. The key factor how to further strengthen the relationship is to enhance the cultural exchange. The US public does not know enough about the European Union, they see it as far too bureaucratic and the Europeans have the worst possible picture of the USA as a country of pop-culture without appreciation of history and lack of education. She concluded by stating that both these images are unfair and they should be changed.

Mike Winnerstig, Analyst from Swedish Defence Research Agency, focused in his speech mainly on the issue of security policy. He stated that there is a historical competition in Europe between those who think it should develop its own defence exclusively based on the EU resources and those who rely on the transatlantic cooperation or NATO. Although the EU has been successfully handling not only its own missions, but also playing a major role in several crisis situations such as the Georgian-Russian conflict, development of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and decoupling from US and their presence is still not acceptable in minds of many Europeans. He illustrated the different approaches on the example of CZ PRES which clearly stated within its priority area „Europe in the world“ that the ESDP should be developed within the framework of NATO. The Swedish Presidency on the other hand does not focus on the issue.

Mr. Winnerstig further remarked on the issue of relationship of the European Union with Russia and the position of the US towards Russia. He stated that in long-term the policy of „appeasement“ proposed by President Obama can be beneficial neither for Europe nor for the US.

Mr. Christian Lequesne, Director of Centre for International Studies and Research, opened his speech also by referring to the title of the panel. He said he was convinced that in Paris or Berlin the title would have been softer, mentioning „new possibilities of cooperation“ but not referring to „disenchantment“. In his view, the reason for this specific approach in towns like Prague or Warsaw was simple – the so called „Obama-mania“ in the West did not resonate the same way in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). In this context, it is very interesting to see that the elites in CEE who fought communism and managed the transition after 1989 actually liked George W. Bush very much and they would have maybe preferred John McCain as president.

Mr. Lequesne suggested that George W. Bush was so popular in the region because it was a man who talked about protection of Western civilisations, a man who said that power is more important than negotiation in the relation with non-democratic nations, a man who promised antimissile basis to protect the West from the Iranian rockets and a man who was supported by the moral discourse of the neoconservatives opposing the good to the bad. Certain number of dissent in CEE had been seduced by this discourse.

The incumbent president Obama is different: he is a man who speaks about dialogue with Russia, who says we should be more open to non-Western world, and who based his speech during his Prague visit in April 2009 on the idea that the 21st century should be the century of denuclearization etc. The thinking in CEE has been strongly influenced by the historical experience of the region shaped by the Cold War. President Bush carried some legacy of the Cold War, but President Obama is clearly a post-Cold War person with a totally different perception of the world.

Mr. Lequesne continued his speech summarizing what the Europeans can expect from President Obama. First of all, Mr. Obama the primary political goal is not foreign policy and Americans will assess him far more by domestic issues. Second, he has a global vision of the world where he does not reflect the specificity of certain regions, including Europe. Third, while Bush held a normative line which exports democracy into the world, Obama is more promoting a pragmatic step-by-step approach. The American position today is therefore less clear and predictable than it had been during the Bush period.

How should Europe react to this situation? Mr. Lequesne suggested that Europe could benefit from this situation and overcome the key clash of today's civilisations between the Western and non-Western world, taking Obama as a major leader of Western nations with non-Western roots who can defend the rules of the West without having to antagonize to non-Western rules. Europe should also seriously take into consideration the big emerging countries including Russia and China. We need a smart policy towards these states based on a mixture of dialogue and toughness. Regarding European security, we should stick to NATO. However, we should also develop ESDP with operation capacity and remember that European interests can be different from the American interests. Hence Europeans should be able to use their capacity in regions and issues of their specific interest.

Mr. Lequesne summarized his speech by stating that President Obama is less readable, more global than regional, but also more in favour of multilateralism which creates a window of opportunity for the Europeans.

Mr. Romancov referred to the fact that Russia was mentioned in almost all the contributions of the panellists. He mentioned that in European history there have been various approaches to the Russian presence in Europe, for example Charles de Gaulle promoted the idea of Europe stretching from the Atlantic to the Ural Mountains or that Gorbachev came up with the idea of a „common European house“. He raised the question: can Russia be considered as part of Europe while USA would withdraw their military presence from Europe?

Ms. Thompson-Jones reacted to the question by stating that Europeans should not be forced to choose, as the most important thing is stable Europe and if it includes also Russia, the better. She also added that Americans do not share the same fears of Russia or the same historical ambivalence; they are more pragmatic and not so vulnerable towards Russia. She also stressed that Russia has never been a factor in the latest decisions regarding the radar and the missile defence; it was purely a pragmatic, fact-based decision responding to current circumstances (e.g. progress in technology).

Mr. Winnerstig opposed the argument that the Russians have been unpredictable. He said he was convinced that the general political strategy framework of Russia has been very much the same for at least the last 200 years – tendency to create battle zones, to have free hands in the Russian neighbourhood, the possibility of using military force if needed. Mr. Winnerstig also expressed his doubts about the statement that the decision on the radar was not at all influenced by Russia. This assumption was confirmed by several high-level democratic politicians to him when he interviewed them last autumn.

Mr. Lequesne stressed that it is necessary to remember that there is a fundamental difference between Russia and the US for Europeans – America represents democracy as we know it, while Russia does not understand this as its normative objective. This naturally poses limits to cooperation. He stated that the questions of different values are also the reason why he personally opposed the possible Russian membership in NATO. According to his opinion, Europe should stress this fact and for example say that Russian policies in its neighbourhood, e.g. South Caucasus, are not in compliance with European position.

Mr. Žižka opened the wider debate while referring to the speech of Charles Grant in which earlier that day he expressed his expectations that the American administration would use their influence on the next conservative government in Great Britain and encourage it to support the development of European integration, including European security and defence policy. He asked the panellists if they consider this development possible and if once Europe stands on its feet, the Americans would withdraw.

According to Ms. Thompson-Jones NATO continues to be priority for the USA. Although a shift can be seen in the way America is related to Europe and a wider focus is presented under the Obama administration, paying attention also to areas like education, climate etc., NATO remains a bedrock of the relationship.

Mr. Winnerstig confirmed that the relationship between ESDP and NATO should not be seen as competitive, but rather as complementary. This is also the current British approach.

Mr. Jan Havránek suggested that the radar has become rather a symbol in the transatlantic affairs to the countries involved. He asked the panellists if they believe that the Czech and Polish complaints about not having the radar are to substitute the need to have strong American presence in the region.

Ms. Thompson-Jones agreed with the suggestion but stressed that the problem is that too much emphasis was put on this issue which in fact only represents a very narrow aspect of the whole relationship. In her view, this is something not the Czech and Polish but the US has to take responsibility for. The US also never appreciated enough the Czech and Polish understanding of the situation – which again can be explained by cultural differences – that an extra American guarantee should be wrapped around them to ensure protection not from Iran but from Russia.

Mr. Lequesne also agreed that the whole debate has a very strong symbolic meaning. When elites of CEE think about American presence in the region, they automatically think about military presence and they have difficulties to accept that we live in a stabilised region. This can change with the new generation of elites and the society as a whole who received their education after 1989, and who do not carry the legacy of the past.

PANEL IV – EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Chairman of the session, Mr. Antonio Missiroli from the European Policy Centre in Brussels opened the panel with a brief summary of the inception and development of what we know today as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). He underlined that the concept is still very much a work in progress which could be also observed during the trio of presidencies when the debate broke into individual schemes such as the Union for the Mediterranean promoted by the French presidency or the Eastern Partnership launched by CZ PRES. He expects that the policy will further develop once the Lisbon Treaty has entered into force.

Jeff Lovitt, Director of Policy Association for an Open Society, stated we should admit that different EU member states have different priorities because of their historical experience and geopolitical strategy. It is important to be honest and also say that the Eastern partnership resulted through horse-trading, that it was a trade-off for the Union for the Mediterranean.

Mr. Lovitt however highlighted that in contrast with the European Neighbourhood Policy which has been seen as something imposed by Brussels, CZ PRES truly tried to bring in the Eastern Partnership countries and promote their engagement. Although it is not clear up to what extent multilateral approach will prove sustainable in the long-term, he personally perceived this as one of the most important achievements of CZ PRES. He also stressed that the biggest soft-power message included in the Eastern Partnership initiative is the visa liberalisation, which was also highlighted during CZ PRES. If the EU should be seen and understood in its neighbourhood, freedom of travel has to be ensured. Also the current Swedish Presidency should get more involved in this issue. Otherwise the feeling of alienation to the EU will remain and the public desire to approach EU will not be stimulated.

Mr. Lovitt concluded his speech by evaluating the current situation in the Eastern Partnership countries and the threat of increasing support of their domestic non-democratic powers. He also shortly commented on the further EU enlargement stating that the negative approach of some major opponents of enlargement is not sustainable. He said that Austria and France have no alternative way to go; on the other hand Turkey can go with Iran or ally with Russia.

Ms. Johanna Popjanevski, Deputy Director of Institute for Security and Development Policy, made a short overview of the events of the trio presidencies and especially the launch and development of the Eastern Partnership initiative under CZ PRES. She underlined the importance of engagement of the civil society from both the EU and Eastern Partnership countries which should be ensured through the so called civil society forum which will hold its first gathering in Brussels in mid-November. After the successful launch of the project, it has been up to the Swedish Presidency to work on its continuation and sustainability. Particularly important will be to make the Eastern Partnership initiative so robust that it will survive the upcoming presidencies which are naturally not focused on this region.

Furthermore, she stated that both the presidencies had to face obstacles and scepticism from the other EU member states. France and Spain fear it could overshadow their own Southern project, Germany fear the reaction of Moscow and other member states were afraid that the Eastern Partnership could open delicate questions such as further enlargement which these member states were not ready to discuss.

Mr. Guillaume Klossa, President and Founder of Europanova, focused on comparison of the Union for the Mediterranean and the Eastern Partnership in terms of inception and objectives. He stated that there had been a bargaining process between the North and the South of the EU and their interests in developing particular dimensions of the neighbourhood policy. This is not a secret; the process was extensively covered and discussed by the media, so it can be considered democratic. The interest of both the parties is however common – both the Southern and Eastern neighbourhoods need to be stabilised for the benefit of the EU as such. The problem which might have caused some tensions is a problem of communication. The fact itself that different countries develop different specialisation should be seen as natural and positive.

He highlighted that what is common to both projects is the lack of concrete political vision and definition of clear policies, quantitative indicators and more precise time planning. This is a common European problem. Without a vision it is impossible to carry out such complex projects in a sustainable way. Another important point is that these projects are perceived as purely French and Czech initiatives respectively. This perception results in the situation that once the presidencies are over, the initiative is fading and in one or two years the projects are forgotten.

Mr. Klossa pointed out that there is one very positive fact – the ENP was a project of elites and experts, however the Union for the Mediterranean and the Eastern Partnership counts on active involvement of the civil societies of all the partners.

Chair of the panel, Mr. Missiroli, warned that there are very high expectations from both of the projects but the possibility to deliver is very limited in budgetary, policy and also political terms. He observed that there is an over-spin regarding both the projects. In his view, we give too many objectives to what are in fact still rather small programmes managed by only one DG in the European Commission without further coordination with other departments such as those focused on trade or foreign policy. The ambitions should not exceed the scope of the project. When talking about the Eastern dimension of the ENP for example, we naturally talk also about Russia or Turkey, but these are extremely complex issues and we should keep in mind that the Eastern Partnership project does not include their solution.

In the following discussion, Mr. Lequesne referred to Mr. Lovitt's note on the importance of the involvement of the European Union in case of Ukraine which could give positive signal and political encouragement to the Ukrainians in terms of democratisation, liberalisation etc. Mr. Lequesne challenged Mr. Lovitt's statement by asking if we do not overestimate the effect of the external political pressure. Mr. Lovitt said he believed that the upcoming civil society forum could contribute to further development of the partnership, especially in the sphere of economic cooperation, energy security, human rights monitoring or consumer rights. Civil society organisations involved can provide the analysis and expertise needed and propose concrete policy recommendations which will lead to such degree of cooperation which will make the relationship of the Eastern Partnership countries with the EU irreversible.

Mr. Braun asked the panellists if they believe that the term „partnership“ should actually be used in this case or if it is more or less just a one way process. He also added that the principle of conditionality was very efficient in the process of enlargement, but in the case of Eastern Partnership the offered „carrots“ are much smaller, and the „ultimate carrot“ in the form of future membership is not present at all.

In reaction to this question, Mrs. Popjanevski referred to one largely overlooked positive component of the projects which is the aim to create partnership also among the countries involved, not only between the EU and the target countries. She stressed that we should keep in mind that there are countries involved in the program which are in conflict with each other and one of the key positive contributions of the project is also to develop partnership among them.

Mr. Klossa: the term partnership is objective of both the projects; conditionality is the problem – only possible if we put in financial means, so far that has not happened. Further discussion on the budget of the project is necessary. Another key issue is to strengthen relationship among young people from the EU member states and develop a network where both young people from EU member states and those from Eastern Partnership would be involved. He also stated that the whole project can only work with a strong political support and commitment.

Mrs. Popjanevski added that also coordination of all the existing initiatives including also the Black Sea synergy has to be strengthened in order to ensure complementarity of the various interests.

Mr. Lovitt also pointed out that there is a special opportunity for the new member states which should use their own historical experience and take the lead in advising the Eastern Partnership countries how to manage economic and political transition.

Mr. Missiroli concluded the topic by summarizing that the chosen format is neither enlargement nor foreign policy and it therefore cannot use classical tools of these policies. For example the often mentioned principle of conditionality cannot be applied because the enlargement is not offered within the project and the involved countries do not get rewarded in return for adopting *acquis communautaire*. He also stressed that the existence of the Eastern Partnership does not necessarily mean it will work. So far, it has been a rather empty shell with only very little resources. Once ratified, the Lisbon Treaty will bring new possibilities and create new tools in external relations. For Europe it is urgent to decide what to do in its neighbourhood which is full of challenges. Mr. Missiroli personally sees an opportunity of bringing forward an initiative from the side of Germany and Poland on the upcoming occasion of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS:

What lessons can be learnt from the Czech Presidency?

Based on key points of conference discussion

- The cooperation of the French-Czech-Swedish trio has contributed to an unprecedented intensification of bilateral relations between the three countries involved, especially French-Czech and Czech-Swedish. The trio has also proved effective when it comes to the preparation of the joint 18-month program.
- A rather limited cooperation had been achieved in specific fields where natural interests of the three member states differ. In other areas it was rather the lack of clear, open and effective communication between the parties involved.
- The need to overcome turbulent moments on the domestic political scene during CZ PRES underlined the importance of well-targeted, professionally-managed and comprehensible communication with focus on political partners, stakeholders and the media in order to demonstrate continued stability, leadership and capacity to launch initiatives despite domestic problems.
- In terms of economy, CZ PRES had a strongly pro-single market profile promoting deregulation and liberalisation which contributed e.g. to the successful G20 summit and management of European economic recovery initiatives. It is, however, important that in the future Europe stops being dogmatic and thinking in pure categories such as liberalism and protectionism etc. and strives to find a balanced approach which would better reflect current challenges.
- One of the key topics regarding the economical success of the European economy is the continuation of the Lisbon strategy. The topic was well-covered by CZ PRES and will also stay high on the agenda during the next presidencies. For the future of the European Union and for its position in the world, it is of the utmost importance to preserve and continue developing its single market which is a unique source of its soft power.
- The efforts of CZ PRES in the area of energy policy should be appreciated. CZ PRES put special emphasis on the aspect of energy security which is understandable with regard to the historical experience and geographical position of the Czech Republic. Regarding environmental aspects of the topic on the other hand, CZ PRES was not especially active which had weakened its position among more environment-oriented partners.
- Another clear example of historical legacy which was present is the thinking and policy making of CZ PRES was the relationship with Russia. Concerns related to this relationship were reflected in a number of policy areas during CZ PRES, especially in the already mentioned field of energy security but also the Eastern Partnership initiative or transatlantic relations and perception of President Obama and his policies towards Russia and the CEE region.
- The discussion regarding various projects contributing to higher energy security in Europe continues also after CZ PRES. Although there are various initiatives – e.g. CZ PRES managed to ensure political support and initial funding for the Nabucco project – there should not be harmful competition among them. What the EU strategically needs is coordination and complementarity. The same can be stated about the relationship of various neighbourhood initiatives launched and promoted by the Trio members.
- All questions raised and specific initiatives launched during CZ PRES such as the Nabucco project or the Eastern Partnership require further work after the end of the Presidency, possibly in cooperation with the upcoming presidencies or other member states, to become sustainable in longer term.

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