



Recommendations from members of the TEPSA network

Priorities and Challenges of the Cypriot EU Presidency

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June 2012

Hanna Ojanen (FIIA, TEPSA Board) and Katrin Böttger (IEP, TEPSA Board), who coordinated the text, will present the recommendations to the incoming Cypriot Presidency at the occasion of TEPSA's Pre-Presidency Conference on 14th and 15th of June 2012 in Nicosia. The conference is organized on behalf of TEPSA by TEPSA's Cypriot member, the Cyprus Institute of Mediterranean European and International Studies (Kimede), in cooperation with the Erasmus Academic Network LISBOAN, the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA), the Cypriot Presidency of the Council of the EU and the University of Cyprus.

Introduction

Cyprus, in its first ever EU presidency, aims at a “better Europe”. This is no doubt what we all would like to see – from all corners of Europe, sceptics and enthusiasts alike. But what is ‘better’? Cyprus intends to focus on a more hospitable Europe, and on one that is more efficient in facing today’s challenges, a Europe closer to its citizens, its neighbours and the world at large, highlighting the fundamental principle of solidarity, by promoting social cohesion, effectiveness and growth in the Union.

Taking over the rotating presidency, Cyprus continues and completes the work of the trio after Poland and Denmark that has concentrated in its joint programme on:

- Strengthening Economic Governance
- Negotiations on the new Multiannual Financial Framework
- Implementation of the “Europe 2020” Strategy
- Focus on the European Citizen
- Sustainable development and sound resource management
- Promotion of Justice and Home Affairs issues
- Reinforcing the EU role on an international level
- EU enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy

As always, the workload of the Presidency is heavy, the crucially important issues many, and the setting of priorities accordingly very hard. And right now, bringing Europe and the EU close to its citizens, its neighbours, and the world, faces outstanding difficulties:

the gravity of the economic crisis, the rise of populism in its different forms, and the flaws in the EU's external influence and attraction.

These problems cannot be solved in six months. But there are important possibilities to further longer-term goals, to cement commitment to them across Europe, and to help improve the working of the EU institutions at a challenging time.

We at TEPSA would like to offer some reflections on what we perceive as main challenges and what we see as the tangible options. We draw in particular on what we perceive as a promising undercurrent: the focus on the citizens, and in particular on the youth, both in Europe and outside. Cyprus could be a country with a young voice to speak to the young when holding the rotating presidency.

We would like to underline five themes in particular:

1. The governance of the Eurozone

During the Cypriot presidency, the current crises of sovereign debt, of the single European currency and of the European banks are a matter of common concern to all members of the EU.

Cyprus wants to strengthen the internal market and work towards increasing growth and employment opportunities, especially for the young.

Cypriot presidency should try to avoid letting the short term reactions drag on and deal with the immediate crisis as procrastination aggravates the scale of the problems. But it also needs to focus on long-term solutions including a more intensive coordination of the national economic policies and the regulation of the finance markets. The focus should shift from austerity to growth and creating jobs, thereby taking more into consideration the citizen's needs. Research and innovation could play a role in this respect.

In addition, also the Multiannual Financial Framework should focus on the EU's long-term goals of the 21st century and could also be used to lead to better spending to boost growth and jobs in a sustainable manner.

2. Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)

The enlargement of the EU has been an important motor of integration throughout the history of the Union, one that has both accelerated the internal development of the Union's institutions and policies, and made it a stronger player internationally. A coherent and credible enlargement policy is essential for the EU's image.

While for Croatia, the ratification process of the accession treaty will continue under the Cypriot Presidency the accession process with the other countries of the Western Balkans should also continue. The recent attempt by Commissioner Štefan Füle to revitalise the Turkish accession process by introducing eight new working groups should be supported by the Presidency.



As to Ukraine, the presidency should communicate clearly and actively the EU's expectations towards it (respect for the rule of law, free and fair parliamentary elections in the autumn), through engaging with the political elite as well as civil society. The aim should be to sign the EU-Ukraine association agreement at the EU-Ukraine summit in December 2012 on the condition that these expectations are met.

One should also continue to offer strong support to the reform efforts of Moldova, in line with the “more for more” approach

The Cypriot Presidency is also a time for focusing on the Mediterranean and its neighbours and for enhancing relations with them. The EU has already started to apply the “more for more” and “less for less” approach in the southern dimension of the ENP. The multilateral dimension may need reviving, but in order to be more effective in the region, tailor-made bilateral approaches should be preferred also because the Union for the Mediterranean is blocked, due to the Israel-Palestine conflict in particular.

Mobility and exchange of students, as well as possibly reviving the idea of a joint EU-Arab university could be steps to take. In addition, a revived Southern Partnership could focus on strengthening regional cooperation both between the Maghreb countries but also between regions in Europe and the Arab world.

3. External relations

External relations is a field in which the presidency no longer plays a strong role. Yet, there is an important signal the Cyprus presidency can give to support the EU's international position: it can commit itself to assisting the High Representative and the EEAS in representing the EU in the world. Putting the EU institutions first is the right gesture at this point in time. The EU needs external credibility. The role of the EEAS and the EU delegations might be crucial in strengthening the EU's knowledge and understanding of its neighbours as well as countries further away, and thus also in building an effective and truly European external relations policy.

4. Migration/asylum

In accordance with commitments adopted earlier by the European Council, the *Common European Asylum System* is to be achieved by the end of the year. This means that soon a uniform and consistent asylum system will be established.

The Cypriot Presidency should ensure that opportunities for legal migration and mobility will be developed. The framework here is the renewed *Global Approach to Migration and Mobility*. Priority has to be given to the files related to seasonal workers and intra-corporate transfers. In order to overcome the present economic crisis in the EU and to compensate certain demographic developments in the Union, a flexible and open attitude is indicated with regard to this subject matter.



The work concerning the *integration* of migrants who have legal residence in the Union has to be continued for social, cultural and solidarity reasons.

In order to respond to *migratory pressures* from outside the EU an effective cooperation has to be developed between the EU and national authorities. Furthermore an adequate implementation of existing principles and measures to reduce irregular migration has to be ensured. In that context, also a dialogue and cooperation with the third countries concerned has to be developed.

In the light of the Commission proposals of September 2011 regarding the *Schengen Governance*, the latest decision by the EU home affairs ministers on the possibility to reinstall border controls in the Schengen area in case of a serious threat to public policy or internal security, and with possible extensions up to two years, represents a renationalisation of decision-making that cannot be accepted. It is a step backwards in integration and undermines the role of EU institutions.

In order to improve the situation for all EU member states and the refugees, a fairer and more balanced migration policy – or immigration solidarity – is necessary for the EU. Cyprus is in a good position not only geographically to call for such an approach

5. The EU and its citizens

Bringing Europe closer to its citizens will be the focus of the European Year of Citizens in 2013. One of the new ways of increasing the direct influence of citizens on EU decision-making is the European Citizens Initiative (ECI). Since the 1 April 2012, 1 Million citizens gathered together have the right to ask the European Commission to draft a legislative proposal for topics where they think Europe should be active.

By 11 May 2012, the first six ECIs in EU history have been registered by the EU Commission on its [official ECI registry](#). The citizens can now make use of their new right and support them. In these times of crises such good news of the progress of European integration should be much better distributed. All EU institutions should do their best to promote this new instrument of participative democracy to make European democracy as lively as possible. To make the ECI a success story of European integration, the Cypriot Council presidency should raise the awareness for the ECI's potentials to strengthen European democracy.

