



Priorities and Challenges of the Czech EU Presidency –

Recommendations from the TEPSA network

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The members presented these recommendations to the upcoming Spanish Presidency on the occasion of TEPSA's Pre-Presidency Conference on 24 and 25 November 2009 in the Spanish Senate. The conference was organized on behalf of TEPSA by its Spanish member, Elcano..

1. Effective institutional implementation of the Lisbon Treaty

The Spanish Presidency should facilitate the functioning of the newly established EU institutional architecture, including the new bodies of the President of the European Council, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European External Action Service. With the new political leadership, the European Union should seek to become more efficient and transparent, more visible for external partners, more competitive and solidarity-minded, more secure and better adapted to the multi-polar, globalized world and contribute to implementing an effective multilateral governance.

2. Energy and climate change

Energy-related issues and environmental sustainability should play essential roles in the Spanish Presidency. The Presidency should seek to ensure follow up of the agenda that will be agreed at the Copenhagen Climate Summit, leading to efficient energy security and sustainable development. It should try to integrate energy issues with climate change policies; promote the energy corridors in Southern Europe as well as the plan for the Mediterranean gas and electricity ring. It should make strong efforts to avoid the recurrent winter shut-off of gas supplies as a result of disputes between Russia and Ukraine, helping the latter especially with the modernisation of its pipelines.

3. Justice and Home Affairs

In order to meet the common threats the EU needs to deepen its policy and cooperation according to the terms of the Stockholm Programme, which most probably will be adopted shortly by the European Council. The Presidency should seek to strengthen police and customs cooperation in order to meet the organized crime and terrorist threats. Dealing with issues of migration and asylum, the EU should implement a system in which labour immigration (without brain drain of poor countries), the acceptance of refugees and means against illegal immigration, are implemented in a fair, humane and transparent way, including burden sharing among EU countries.

4. Overcoming the economic crisis and paving the way for recovery

The Presidency should seek to strengthen new financial supervision mechanisms agreed on at EU and G20 level. It should take steps towards promoting a European supervision framework that would further regulate high-risk funds, fiscal zones and create alert banking crisis resolution mechanisms. It should also contribute to developing an institutional set-up to control the banking, real estate and insurance sectors as well as increased economic governability, transparency and oversight over the financial sector.

5. Strengthening the Post-Lisbon Strategy

The Presidency should embark on a sustainable development- and outward-oriented strategy focused on increasing EU competitiveness. This would focus on (1) green growth, embracing sustainable infrastructure investments (mainly transport and energy), (2) lasting jobs, aiming at further adaptation of the labour market to current challenges including training of the labour force with special emphasis

on transfer of entrepreneurial skills and (3) innovation, strengthening intellectual synergies across Europe coupled with a genuine European patent system. The EU budgetary framework starting 2014 should also be structured according to these main priorities.

6. European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

The EU declared 2010 the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. In this framework the Presidency should act towards combating homelessness in urban areas, eliminate malnutrition and extremely poor living conditions. As a first step coordination should take place among the 27 Member States exchanging best practices. Also, a special tranche of the European Social Fund could be targeted to finance such projects in the least developed regions of the Union.

7. Enlargement

The Presidency should pursue current negotiations, not least for the sake of the Union's credibility and with a view to uniting and thereby strengthening Europe. In particular, its ambition should be to conclude negotiations with Croatia in 2010, to pursue negotiations with Turkey and open them with Iceland, subject to the countries' own progress in making reforms. By the same token the gradual integration of the whole Western Balkan region into the EU should be put on a visible track, leading to these states' full membership in the foreseeable future – once conditions are met. At the same time the Union's enlargement policy must be adequately and timely communicated to the citizens.

8. External Relations

The Presidency should continue the EU's work within the ENP and the Eastern Partnership with a view to fostering increased integration and stability. EU engagement with Eastern countries is particularly important, since the economic and financial crisis has hit these countries severely. The EU, furthermore, needs to find agreement on a united policy towards Russia characterized by openness and the possibility of frank discussions but also cooperation in meeting common threats. The EU should invite Russia to participate in selected projects within the Eastern Partnership framework, but should make it clear that this does not mean that Moscow has a right of veto on the EU policy towards Eastern neighbours.

The strengthening of the Eastern dimension of the ENP should be accompanied by an equal strengthening of its Mediterranean dimension. The Union for the Mediterranean must be credible and the EU policy towards the Mediterranean and the Middle East should become more ambitious and effective, not limited to economic and financial cooperation. Continued transatlantic cooperation is of vital importance, again in the effort of finding solutions to the acute common global problems, such as Afghanistan, Iran and the Middle East.