



Priorities and Challenges of the Polish EU Presidency

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Jaap de Zwaan, who coordinated the text, presented the recommendations to the incoming Polish Presidency at the occasion of TEPSA's Pre-Presidency Conference on 30th of June and 1st of July 2011 in Natolin. The conference was organized on behalf of TEPSA by TEPSA's Polish full member European Institute Łódź and associate member the College of Europe Natolin - Warsaw campus.

Introduction

On 1 July 2011 Poland will take over the Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers.

'European integration as a source of economic growth', a 'Secure Europe' and a 'Europe benefiting from openness' will be the three basic priorities of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU, according to the work programme adopted by the government in Warsaw on Tuesday 31 May.

On 1 July 2011 also the Presidency Trio Poland-Denmark-Cyprus will take over from the trio Spain-Belgium-Hungary. To that extent the present recommendations are addressed to the Danish and Cypriote authorities as well.

A preliminary remark concerns the Foreign Affairs. Although we recognize that the Presidency of the Council has no longer specific responsibilities in this field, we like to stress the importance for the European Union of really common and effective policies in these fields in order to be recognized worldwide as a global player. Indeed, in view of the multipolar world where we live in and which is still characterized by many conflicts, the European Union should in international conferences and negotiations speak more with a single voice. This recommendation though should be taken into account first of all by the President of the European Council and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

1. Promoting economic growth

European integration should serve as a source of growth. To accelerate the recovery from the crisis and to underpin future economic prospects, the onus should be put on restoring growth, notably by seeking to mobilize the unused potential of the Single Market.

The Presidency should seek to foster economic growth by further developing the internal market, including the electronic market, and by making greater use of the EU budget to build a competitive Europe. To this end the new EU budget should serve the implementation of the 'Europe 2020' strategy.

2. Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020

Under the Polish Presidency the discussions on the MFF 2014-2020 will start on the basis of concrete Commission proposals. The new MFF should be designed in such a way that it can serve as a proactive instrument to support sustainable economic growth in Europe.

Furthermore it is essential that the EU budget takes into account the consolidation efforts made by the Member States. In that sense the budget should be limited to 1 % of the EU GNI (Gross National Income).

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) remains the biggest single component of the budget. Renewed efforts are needed to reduce its share. The new CAP should remain market-oriented, while taking into account public common goods, including food security, rural development and environmental protection.

On the other hand, more solidarity and, specifically, more European assistance is needed to help poorer regions in the European Union.

Furthermore the new MFF should target areas such as the knowledge based job agenda, energy security, research and innovation, green technologies and Europe's role on the global stage.

3. Improving the EU's security

Different dimensions of a secure Europe require attention: security of energy supplies, financial and economic security, food security, border security and military security.

The European Council meeting of 4 February 2011 agreed to establish the single European energy market by 2014. More particularly an external energy policy of the EU has to be developed. To this end conclusions on energy relationships between the EU and third countries should be adopted by the end of 2011.

Financial and economic security and stability is needed in order to arrive at a situation of economic growth.

Food security also is essential. In this context reference is made to the current alarms concerning food in Germany (the E. coli –EHEC bacteria- outbreak). Also a relationship does exist with the reform of the CAP and the debate on the EU budget.

As to border security Frontex (the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the external borders of the EU) has to be reinforced and made more effective in supporting Member States in times of crisis, such as currently in North Africa and the Middle East.

At the military level, the EU's military and civil capability should be enhanced. In this context it is welcomed that the Polish Presidency intends to pay more attention to the EU-NATO dialogue.

4. Area of Freedom, Security and Justice

The Stockholm Programme has to be further implemented. In that context the Presidency has to secure that 2012 is the final date for creating a Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Also a credible policy on legal migration has to be set up.



The opinion of the European Parliament of 8 June 2011, according to which Romania and Bulgaria are technically prepared to participate fully in the Schengen cooperation, deserves a positive follow-up by the Council. It is expected that during the Polish Presidency both countries will be enabled to accede to the zone without internal border controls.

In this context -and also in view of the experiences with the Arab Spring events- it should be underlined that a reintroduction of internal barriers to free movement within the European Union has to be prevented. Free movement of persons is a fundamental principle of the internal market. A reintroduction of barriers may also imply high costs. As to the security of EU's external borders Frontex should be made more effective in supporting Member States activities in times of crisis (see also above, 3. Improving the EU's Security).

5. Enlargement

Following the green light given by the European Council on 23/24 June 2011 to the successful conclusion of the accession negotiations with Croatia, the Polish Presidency should ensure that the accession treaty is signed in the second half of this year.

The negotiations for membership with Iceland should be pursued.

As to Turkey, the negotiations for membership have to be continued. In doing so, the EU has to be credible and to act with honesty and openness in relation to this candidate state. In this context we have to realize that without credibility Turkey will have no incentive for reforms.

Assuming that the Commission -in its report of October 2011- will give a positive opinion about the developments in Montenegro, it seems that the negotiations for accession with that country (that was granted the applicant status in December 2010) can start during the Polish Presidency.

With regard to Macedonia/FYROM which applied for membership in 2004 and was granted candidate status in 2005, efforts have to be made to solve the outstanding problem with Greece related to its name in order to enable the negotiations for accession to be opened. Further delay can only discourage reforms taking place in this country.

Now that General Radko Mladic has been handed over to the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia on 1 June 2011, the handling of the Serbian application for membership, presented on 22 December 2009, deserves a new impetus, more particularly in order to examine whether Serbia can be granted the status of candidate

Moreover the European aspirations of the other countries of the Western Balkans have to be supported.

6. Neighbourhood Policy and Russia

In the next months talks on association agreements and free-trade agreements with most of our Eastern neighbours -Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan- should be taken forward. Key decisions on visa liberalization with neighbouring states in the East may be taken at the Eastern Partnership Summit in September 2011 in Warsaw. Progress with the Europeanization of these countries is desirable since, to the extent they fulfill the requirements concerned, they are entitled to claim to become full members of EU. In that context not only the Presidency but politicians in all the present



Member States should undertake every effort to overcome tendencies of –what is often called- enlargement fatigue under their peoples.

In the light of the recent Arab Spring events the Presidency should ensure with regard to the Southern neighbours that the European Union strengthens its help for the transition to democracy and the socio-economic reforms taking place in that region, taking account of the Commission's recent proposals. Efforts to strengthen the judiciary and the fight against corruption in these countries have to be supported. Also the possibilities to strengthen and further develop the existing association and cooperation agreements into tailor made arrangements with the European Union have to be examined.

As to the relationship with Russia, we have to wait for progress in the negotiations for a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, for example with regard to the WTO membership of Russia. Hopefully such a new partnership agreement can be completed before the end of this year.

7. Doha Round and international trade

The EU has always been a key player in international trade liberalization negotiations. The latest of these is the Doha Development Round which began in 2001. The aim of these negotiations, held in the framework of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), is to reduce tariffs and remove other barriers to world trade. Progress in the Doha Round so far has been slow. Wide and persistent differences have opened up between the rich and poor countries on issues concerning access to each other's markets and the long-running question of agricultural subsidies.

Bringing the Doha negotiations to a successful conclusion is by far the best course of action. It is therefore to be hoped that the Doha Round can now finally be successfully concluded by the end of 2011.

8. Research and innovation

Research and innovation help deliver jobs, prosperity and quality of life. Although the EU is the global leader in many technologies, it faces increasing challenges from traditional competitors and emerging economies alike. Joint programming efforts can thus deliver results that the EU countries cannot achieve in isolation.

In view of the specificity of the activities of network organizations like TEPSA the Presidency's attention is asked for one particular element of the EU's future research and innovation programme, the Eight Framework Programme. In this respect we recall that there has been some debate about whether future programmes should continue to have a dedicated funding line for collaborative research in the area of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH). We are strongly in favor of maintaining the present policy. Indeed, because the Commission often refers to research on 'Grand Societal Challenges' (such as ageing, climate change and so on), it would be a grave mistake not to fund fundamental SSH research which may contribute to a full understanding of these issues.

