



# Recommendations from members of the TEP SA network to the Dutch Presidency

The Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA) has the tradition to formulate recommendations to the incoming Council Presidency. These recommendations have been prepared by the following members of the TEP SA network: **Iain Begg** (TEPSA Board, LSE, London), **Brendan Donnelly** (Federal Trust, London), **Juha Jokela** (TEPSA Board, FIIA, Helsinki), **Wolfgang Mühlberger** (FIIA, Helsinki), **Johannes Pollak** (IHS, Vienna), **Diāna Potjomkina** (LIIA, Riga) and **Mark Rhinard** (UI, Stockholm). They do not necessarily represent the view of TEP SA or its member institutes.

Iain Begg will present the recommendations to the incoming Dutch Presidency at the occasion of the TEP SA-Clingendael Pre-Presidency Conference on 19 and 20 November 2015 in The Hague. The conference is organised by the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' in cooperation with the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA), and with the support of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Representation of the European Commission in the Netherlands, the European Cultural Foundation, the Municipality of The Hague, Leiden University and the PONT project.

*November 2015*

## Migration Crisis

The refugee crisis is not new and will not go away soon, even though it is only in the last two years that it has hit Europe, yet it is turning into the defining issue of our time and a significant stress-test for European solidarity. That said, in proportional terms, Europe has only had to deal with a small fraction of those displaced by war and violence in North Africa and the Middle East and thus has a moral obligation to 'do its part', if only from a humanitarian perspective, to assist in ameliorating the situation. It is time to acknowledge that the crisis confronting the EU in this regard stems from past policy failures, including: divergent criteria for accepting asylum seekers in different EU states, under-resourced administrations in the states facing migration flows most directly, and the lack of effective - yet humane - control of the EU's external borders.

Starting from the premises that stop-gap solutions will no longer suffice and that the problem will worsen during the next semester and continue polarizing European societies, and taking account of the unsatisfactory outcome of the Malta summit, TEP SA calls on the Dutch Presidency to take the lead in improving the coherence of the EU's response to the current migration crisis. The Presidency should emphasize that no single country is to blame for the problem, but that all EU states must take responsibility for helping to resolve it, requiring significant give-and-take amongst them. Actions could include:

- Moving swiftly towards a truly European system for the processing of asylum applications along the borders of the EU, building on and greatly expanding the quotas agreed for 160,000 refugees in October 2015,
- Improving financial redistribution from less affected to more affected states to help address imbalances, and
- Implementing a stronger border control system to assist in channelling applications through official centres.

## **EU external policy I – Syria**

The Syrian civil war is already well into its fifth year and its costs in human and political terms is rising inexorably. The EU should take a much more active role in the resolution of the conflict. Specifically:

- The EU should reaffirm its stance that Assad's departure from power is an essential precondition for ending the conflict and should work actively towards achieving his resignation.
- The EU should greatly strengthen its approach to stemming the flow of foreign fighters from EU Member States into Syria, notably by collaborating with Turkey to seal the borders.
- The EU should support a comprehensive approach against jihadi structures, involving action to disrupt the tacit financial support from Gulf countries and alliance building.

In addition, the EU needs urgently to adopt a coherent policy towards the frontline states, especially Turkey but also those of other neighbouring states (Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq), both to support them in coping with refugees (financially and logistically) and in moving towards a political solution to the Syrian crisis. Therefore a constant push on all players involved in a political solution must remain high on the EU agenda.

## **EU external policy II – the Eastern Neighbourhood and Russia**

The EU should, where appropriate in coordination with the US and NATO, promote reforms in the Eastern Neighbourhood, while keeping the process entirely transparent for third parties. Negotiations on a cooperation agreement with Armenia that would replace an Association Agreement are overdue, and it is time also to revisit possible agreements with Azerbaijan and Belarus with a view to upgrading them (without prejudice to the stipulations of the sanctions regime). The Dutch Presidency could, for example, encourage greater concertation between the actors involved in the Energy Union and the External Action Service. Inclusion of these Eastern states in the EU's energy community is worth exploring.

The EU must step up its efforts in countering Russian propaganda and increase the human and financial resources available to the European External Action Service task force, including support for existing and new Russian-language media broadcasting both for the European Union and for the Eastern Neighbourhood. The Dutch Presidency is encouraged to follow-up on the feasibility study on Russian language media initiatives that it commissioned and start implementing specific measures. In parallel, the EU must step up its own communication efforts with Eastern Partnership societies, including more high-quality information provision in national languages and in Russian.

## **Economy**

Despite recent initiatives to boost investment, economic growth in the EU remains weak, especially in much of the Eurozone. Citizens perceive a lack of urgency, imagination and overall coherence in restoring growth, and this inevitably accentuates disenchantment with EU policies and the European integration 'project' more generally. The obstacles to growth and jobs have been extensively analysed and even though there is no magic formula, there is a need to go beyond the rhetoric of better regulation and completing the single market and to refresh the messages.



In many EU countries, shortcomings in public administration and short-sightedness in modernising economies for the skills and markets of tomorrow have inhibited progress. As a country that has, in the past, been adept at changing its economic model, the Netherlands is well-placed to put forward a vision for new approaches to economic and social investment.

Specific recommendations are as follows:

- Imbalances in the current account positions of some Member States, notably the surpluses recorded by Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark have become even bigger than at the height of the euro crisis. Painful though it may be for the Netherlands to confront this, a more effective and symmetric means of reducing imbalances is needed and more robust implementation of the macroeconomic imbalances procedures should be a priority.
- Emigration of more skilled and qualified workers from southern Europe could be damaging for future growth prospects in the countries of origin. The presidency should, first, insist on a study on this phenomenon and, second, explore policies to cope with it.
- The Europe 2020 strategy has become the forgotten instrument and manifestly has little resonance within most, if not all, Member States. The time has come for a hard choice: either revive it, and endow it with sufficient substance to make it credible, or kill it off.

## Energy security

Stop mixing up development aid with energy security. That means accepting that the transfer of Russian gas through Ukraine will be one third of today's volume in 2019/20. The compensation for this reduction will be the extension of NordStream which is cheaper and more feasible than any Turkstream version. For this extension to work the OPAL bottleneck needs to be opened. The Dutch Presidency is strongly encouraged to launch a process to define demand for pipe capacity (transport booking) which should be started immediately.

The Southeastern corridor is of utmost importance for the supply of gas in the southern EU member states and, with this in mind, the Commission's new "small is beautiful" (i.e. the idea to contract with local transmission system operators for the building of interconnectors) cannot work due to the endemic corruption in Romania and Bulgaria. Instead the Dutch Presidency should push urgently for the start of an international tender for a pipeline project connecting Europe to the Black Sea and Central Asian resources. That will require significant support for TANAP as the "feed pipe" for such a new pipeline. In the meantime, all efforts should be made to invest in East-West connection to make full use of idle LNG terminals in Western Europe.

## The UK question

It would be a mistake to view the UK's demands as a distraction to be minimised, not least because some of what the UK seeks is also likely to be in the interest of other member states. The Dutch Presidency should make all reasonable efforts to accommodate the desire of the British government to review and reconfigure its position within the Union, but also use the opportunity to initiate wider reforms. It should however make clear to the UK that the fundamental principles of the Union such as freedom of movement and non-discrimination cannot in any circumstances be compromised by this review. At a time when these and other fundamental principles of the Union are under demagogic attack in many parts of Europe, it is incumbent upon the Presidency to defend them with especial vigour, not just in dealings with the British government, but more generally.

