



Recommendations from members of the TEPSA network:

Priorities and Challenges of the Danish EU Presidency

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Brendan Donnelly, who coordinated the text, will present the recommendations to the incoming Danish Presidency at the occasion of TEPSA's Pre-Presidency Conference on 8th and 9th of December 2011 in Copenhagen. The conference was organized on behalf of TEPSA by TEPSA's Danish member: the Danish Institute for International Studies.

1. The governance of the Eurozone

Although Denmark is not a member of the Eurozone, the current crisis of the single European currency is a matter of common concern to all members of the European Union. During its Presidency, the Danish government will have the right and indeed obligation to press for urgent and effective action by the Eurozone countries in particular to demonstrate by deeds rather than rhetoric their absolute commitment to the maintenance of the single European currency. In some countries of the Eurozone, the necessary deeds will consist primarily of domestic economic and political reform. In other countries, greater political and intellectual flexibility is the major contribution that can be made to resolving the crisis. The urgency of this crisis is so pressing that the introduction of new measures such as Eurobonds or an enhanced role for the European Central Bank as a lender of last resort cannot await the final outcome in the longer term of efforts to reform the domestic structures of countries in the Eurozone now struggling to fund their national debt at acceptable levels of interest. The Danish Presidency should stand ready to facilitate over the next six months necessary revisions of the European Treaties.

2. Multi-speed Europe and the Financial Perspective

The development of the single European currency over the past decade has led to a number of potential dividing lines between different members of the Union. These dividing-lines can be observed within the Eurozone; between the Eurozone's current membership and those outside it; and within those countries which are not members of the Eurozone, some of which seek to join the single European currency, while others do

not. It will be an important task of the Danish Presidency to remind the Member States of the dangers arising from the emergence of such potential fault-lines. It is desirable and necessary that the Eurozone now moves towards more economic, fiscal and political integration. But this greater integration should proceed with the greatest possible respect for the rights of those outside the Eurozone and the maintenance of the greatest possible degree of political and economic solidarity among the now 27 Member States of the Union. In this latter connection, the Danish Presidency has the opportunity to encourage constructive discussion on the next Medium Term Financial Perspective. A hastily-negotiated agreement on this subject shortly before the next Perspective comes into force is unlikely adequately to reflect the Union's commitment to sustainable growth, to the creation of employment and to solidarity between its Member States. If well-prepared, the new Financial Perspective can act to soften at least some of the asperities of national austerity measures. This is unlikely to happen if the Union's budget is simply seen as a competition between national governments to divide the resources of the budget in a nationally advantageous way between themselves.

3. External policy - European External Action Service

The Danish Presidency should recognize the immensity of the task which has been entrusted to the High Representative and the as yet unfinished nature of the Action Service on which the Representative relies. The Lisbon Treaty left unresolved a number of issues relating to the role of the High Representative and the Action Service. It would have been unreasonable to expect that these new institutions should be able to respond to the political upheavals of 2011 with the same rapidity and clarity as could some (but by no means all) national governments within the Union. Public recognition by the Presidency of the efforts of the High Representative and her status as a legitimate external spokeswoman for the Union should not however preclude private encouragement to her and her advisers to accelerate the building-up of the Action Service's resources, to organize better her representative activities and to provide more personal and administrative leadership to the Service as a whole. The Union is likely to face in 2012 severe external challenges, not least in the Middle East. A well-functioning apparatus for external policy will be essential if the Union is effectively to fulfil in that region its traditional role as a credible defender of human rights and provider of political, technical and economic support to homegrown processes of democratization.

4. Enlargement and Eastern Partnership

The signature of the accession treaty with Croatia is greatly to be welcomed and the ratification process will begin under the Danish Presidency. For the other countries of the Western Balkans, the accession process should continue, with those involved recalling that the success of this process requires full respect of the EU's membership criteria and satisfactory standards of economic and political governance. Negotiations with Iceland are progressing well and should be pursued. For Turkey the accession process remains the most effective framework for promoting domestic reforms, and the EU for its part needs to strengthen its relations with Turkey in areas of common interest such as foreign policy. In its exchanges with the neighbouring countries in Eastern Europe, the Presidency should seek to develop and improve the Eastern Partnership in



ways that promote the adoption of European standards and lead to further economic and political integration.

5. Environmental and Climate negotiations

Denmark is well placed to be an effective leader and advocate for the Union in these areas of policy. Its domestic commitment to the fostering of “green growth” and its practice of bringing together both Danish governmental and non-governmental actors to discuss environmental questions are helpful models which the Danish government can usefully follow at the European level during its Presidency. The concept of “green growth” is one likely to commend itself even to those Member States traditionally uneasy about the supposed trade-off between growth and high environmental standards. Wide consultation at the European level is likely to underline the pervasiveness of environmental challenges in such apparently distinct spheres of policy as energy, agriculture, fisheries and transport. It may also lead to regional initiatives within the European framework, in such geographically specific areas as the Baltic Sea. Externally, the Presidency should continue to press for the widest possible measure of binding international agreements, between as many partners as possible, particularly in the field of climate change. It will be particularly important that the Union’s institutions and Member States pursue coherent and agreed policies in the aftermath of the Durban Conference of the Parties.

6. A positive Presidency

Beyond any specific recommendations, a great general service the Danish Presidency can render to the European Union is to present itself to all audiences as an enthusiastic, optimistic and energetic advocate of the Union and its works. The past five years have seen a noticeable diminution in the Union’s self-confidence and this lack of self-confidence has played its part in encouraging the Union’s critics to caricature the euro as an unstable and anti-democratic arrangement; to criticize free movement within the Union as a threat to domestic prosperity; to stigmatize the Union’s institutions as notably inefficient and corrupt; and to argue that a loosening of European ties would better serve national interests. A robust and self-assured Presidency of the Union can act as an important bulwark against such misconceptions. The current Danish government is particularly well placed take the lead in steering public and political opinion towards a generally more positive perception of the Union than it sometimes enjoys in Denmark, in the other twenty six Member States of the EU or in the wider international community as a whole.

