



Recommendations from members of the TEPSA network

Priorities and Challenges of the Lithuanian EU Presidency

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1. Economic crisis

Despite more positive news from a number of indicators, the crisis is still not over and is now having increasingly worrying effects on employment and social inclusion. The Presidency should ensure that the Union does not lose sight of the need to deal with the continuing problems and likely aftermath of the crisis, and take steps to limit any emerging complacency about the need for vigilance.

2. Economic and Monetary Union

The blueprints for genuine economic and monetary union map out a series of measures that will need to be taken to reinforce the stability and effectiveness of the euro. The Presidency would perform an extremely valuable function by establishing a schedule for advancing a 'genuine Economic and Monetary Union' (GEMU), establishing appropriate milestones to assure progress and initiating action on some of the most pressing changes. At the same time a professional study would be welcomed on the 'costs of non-Euro'.

3. Europe 2020 Strategy

Looking at the long-term impact of the crisis and crisis management, a realistic approach to the intertwined relation between growth and jobs has to be developed. First, the labour market needs to be reformed in order to avoid massive social marginalization with unforeseeable political, social and economic consequences. Second, utmost attention has to be paid to inclusive growth based not only on strict economic and environmental aspects but also on social and mental/behavioural aspects of the Member States and the Union as such. Third, a new strategy of cohesion and solidarity has to be implemented urgently in order to avoid further cleavages and 'qualitative differentiations' within the EU, with incalculable costs and consequences for the sustainability of the EU integration process in the coming years.

4. European Year of the Citizens 2013/Freedom, Security and Justice

In the European Year of the Citizens 2013 citizens need to be informed about their rights and opportunities arising from their EU Citizenship. Also the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice has to be further developed. Discussions about the follow-up of the Stockholm Programme (2010-2014), the guiding framework for the political and operational agenda of the Union in the JHA field, must begin in a timely manner.

Decisions regarding a Common European Asylum System (the 'second' asylum package) are nearly all adopted. Now attention has to be paid to a correct and timely implementation by the Member States. Equally further steps regarding a proper common legal migration policy, as an important contribution to the EU's Growth Agenda, have to be taken.

5. Neighbourhood policy

The Presidency should strengthen the Union's relations with the European Neighbourhood countries, encouraging them to pursue reforms and implementation of agreements with the EU. The Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius in November 2013 will be an occasion to make concrete progress in this respect. The summit might be the date for signing the Association Agreement, including the first ever 'deep and comprehensive free trade agreement', between the European Union and Ukraine, and for approving the start of similar negotiations with Moldova, Georgia and eventually Armenia. These actions would be important steps not only for the economic integration of these economies into the EU Single Market but also as signals of a credible EU commitment towards the Eastern Partnership program as a whole. As a Baltic state, Lithuania, is well placed to develop the EU's strategy for the Baltic region.

6. Enlargement

We welcome Croatia as a new member of our family, and congratulate its people on their determination to satisfy the conditions of membership.

The enlargement process must be maintained with the countries of the Western Balkans.

The EU's interest in the accession of Turkey is highlighted by its role as a stable foreign policy actor in its region, and by its rate of economic development. But the political criteria for EU membership require Turkey to make more progress in conforming to the European standards.

Although Iceland's new government has suspended accession negotiations, we should remain open to Iceland's future participation in the European project.

7. Differentiation in the EU

The Presidency should seek opportunities to reaffirm that the 'acquis communautaire' and 'institutional solidarity' are two foundation-stones of the European Union. Efforts to dismantle the *acquis* must be opposed. Institutional solidarity is an effective bulwark against divisions within the Union, be these divisions of size, wealth or geography. The Eurozone, if its future is to be assured, will need to follow increasingly the integrative institutional model offered to it by the European Union.

