



INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE
VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

TEPSA PRE-PRESIDENCY CONFERENCE REPORT

Lithuanian EU Pre-Presidency TEPSA conference

**Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University
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WELCOMING ADDRESS

The Lithuanian Pre-Presidency Conference was opened with welcoming remarks from the President of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė, Director of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University, Ramūnas Vilpišauskas and Secretary General of TEPSA, Jean Paul Jacqué.

Dalia Grybauskaitė outlined the main tasks and challenges for the upcoming Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council. She stressed that Lithuania had inherited a serious economic situation and rather different opinions regarding the best solution to it. Thus the problems to be tackled throughout the Presidency will mainly concern the economic situation, focusing on deepening the Economic and Monetary Union and on the creation of a Banking Union.

Other priority questions on the Lithuanian Presidency agenda will include the finalization of the common energy market, strengthening the internal market and tackling youth unemployment. Special attention will be drawn to the Baltic Sea Cooperation and openness of Europe as well as the Eastern Partnership goals. The upcoming Vilnius Summit will be an event of great geopolitical importance for Europe. The ability to sign an association agreement with Ukraine and initial agreements with Armenia and Moldova will be some of the key factors determining the success of the Lithuanian Presidency. At the end of her speech the President greeted the participants of the conference, emphasizing the importance of the European academic community in accomplishing the goals, significant for the whole EU.

Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, Director of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science (IIRPS), Vilnius University, welcomed the guests from TEPSA together with his Lithuanian colleagues from academia and the representatives of politics, business and media. He wished participants an interesting conference, informative debates and also to enjoy Vilnius and the President's Palace.

Jean-Paul Jacqué, Secretary General of TEPSA, greeted the participants and congratulated Lithuania as the first Baltic country to take up the Presidency of the EU Council. He underlined the importance of Lithuanian priorities, which would be discussed during the Conference: Eastern partnership, common energy policy, economic governance reforms and challenges of differentiation. However, he stressed that there were plenty of other practical issues that were of great importance for the EU, such as finishing the legislative work, because the mandate of the European Parliament was coming to an end, preparing the budget and wrapping up the financial framework. Finally, Jean-Paul Jacqué wished a successful and productive conference.

SESSION 1: PRIORITIES OF LITHUANIAN PRESIDENCY

The session was chaired by Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, Director of IIRPS, Vilnius University. There were two panellists in the session, Linas Linkevičius, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, and András Inotai, Research Professor at the Institute for World Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, TEPSA Board Member.

Linas Linkevičius outlined the main Lithuanian priorities for the EU Presidency, emphasizing the need to maintain consistency with the foregone Irish Presidency and the upcoming Greek Presidency. He firstly explained the three pillars of the Lithuanian Presidency, which are based on the motto: 'For a Credible, Growing and Open Europe'. 'Credible' was explained as ensuring credibility of the financial system, strengthening the Economic and Monetary Union, ensuring fiscal discipline and, finally, coping with the crisis. 'Growing' signifies the attempts to implement the single market, promote research and innovations and tackle unemployment, especially youth unemployment. Lastly, 'Open Europe' is associated with the Union's ability to conduct and upgrade dialogue with the third countries, including candidate countries, for instance, Serbia or Turkey.

Secondly, the Minister discussed the priorities added by the Lithuanian Parliament, which could also be integrated into the three pillars. He started with the common energy policy and the EU's goal to fully establish the internal market and to eliminate energy islands inside the EU by the start of the year 2015. He also emphasized the importance of the ability to 'speak with one voice', which could strengthen the European position in the external energy market. He also expressed his concerns about Belarus' plans to build a new nuclear power plant next to the Lithuanian border. The Minister continued by naming the rest of the priorities, such as the regional policy and the importance of the Baltic Sea region cooperation for Lithuania, the Eastern partnership, which would be discussed later, and the issue of European external border protection.

András Inotai, presented the Recommendations from the members of the TEPSA network to the Lithuanian Presidency. The recommendations focused on eight policy areas: the economic crisis, economic and monetary union, new financial framework, 2020 strategy, 2013 as the year of citizens, neighbourhood policy, enlargement policy and the differentiation in the EU. Minister Linkevičius responded to these recommendations with short comments on how Lithuanian Presidency sees those priorities.

SESSION 2: EASTERN PARTNERSHIP AND EU'S ROLE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The panel consisted of five speakers: Linas Linkevičius, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, who agreed to stay for this session as well, Klaudijus Maniokas, Associate Professor at IIRPS, Vilnius University, Andrew Wilson, Senior Policy Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, London, Kristi Raik, Researcher at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Helsinki and Gunilla Herolf, Vice President at the Royal Swedish Academy of War Sciences, Stockholm, TEPSA Board Member. The chair Olaf Osica, Director of the Centre for Eastern Studies, Warsaw, introduced the panel and raised the guiding questions for the session, stressing the potential impact of the Eurozone crisis on the extent and type of European engagement in the Eastern Partnership Program.

According to Linas Linkevičius, the Vilnius Summit will be the highlight of the Eastern Partnership Initiative during the time of the Lithuanian Presidency. Signing an Association Agreement with Ukraine is seen as one of the key factors determining success of the whole Presidency. The Minister expressed his hopes that after the Summit, Europe would develop a strategy with regard to Eastern Partnership, because at the time being the interest mainly lied in the ad hoc issues. It is also of crucial importance to differentiate between the countries. There



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are different expectations, motivations and goals to be achieved with regard to each country and thus the strategy towards them should differ.

The Minister shortly described the issues relating to each of the six countries, covered by the Eastern Partnership Program. He touched upon the questions of the treatment of Yulia Timoshenko in Ukraine, the rapid improvements made in Moldova, the high expectations related to Georgia and Armenia and the specific situation with Azerbaijan and the complicated relationship with Belarus, which has no intention of European integration as of now.

Klaudijus Maniokas started by defining the key objective of the Eastern Partnership, as well as the Neighbourhood Policy at large, which is achieving the domestic change in the neighbourhood. The change was specified as ensuring effective functioning of democracy, rule law, stability, market economy and openness. Klaudijus Maniokas further discussed what motivated these countries to work towards such changes. He firstly stressed the importance of EU membership prospects, which could allow us to apply stricter conditions for the Eastern neighbours. However, the example of the Western Balkans shows that membership might be an insufficient incentive. The speaker suggested that the interest of Eastern Partnership partners also lied in seeing more hard power of the EU to counterbalance the influence of Russia. Moreover, the prospects of visa free travel and financial support, as well as trade and association agreements are some of the backbones of successful development of Eastern Partnership Program. In conclusion, Klaudijus Maniokas stated that what was needed was not the “more for more” approach, mentioned by Linas Linkevičius, but a clear motivation to change.

Andrew Wilson started by advising Lithuanians to have realistic expectations about the Vilnius Summit. He also suggested taking into consideration the criticism towards the Eastern Partnership, which is concerned with the structural design of the program, its applicability to individual countries and, crucially, money. He defined the main Lithuania’s task as constructing the general narrative, which explained why we should invest in the Eastern Partnership in the first place. Andrew Wilson emphasized that such justification was especially necessary in the context of current struggles among the partner countries to democratize.

Andrew Wilson briefly discussed the situation in each of the six partner countries individually. He noted that signing an agreement with Ukraine might be risky, since Ukrainian government was trying to do a minimum necessary and might try to get away without implementing long-term reforms with regards to their legal system. Moldova has been described as having implemented some key reforms, but not in the legal area, which is the most problematic. According to Andrew Wilson, the relationship with Georgia is mostly troubled because of a “wrong diagnosis”, which is a failure to recognize the specificity of country’s legal problems and acknowledged its improvement in some cases. The speaker did not have high hopes for Armenia, which is in a complicated situation due to the contested nature of previous elections and high influence of local oligarchs. Finally, Andrew Wilson discussed Belarus, stressing its dependence on Russia. He claimed that in the current situation EU countries had little leverage to pursue their agenda there.

Kristi Raik believed that even though the EU was still relatively attractive to its Eastern neighbours, it was not attractive enough to transform these countries and make them better governed, more stable and more democratic. She claimed that the main presumptions at the start of the Eastern Partnership Program might have been wrong. The reform experience in Central and Eastern Europe cannot be so easily transferred further to the East. Moreover, the motivation differs sharply with no membership perspectives being offered. Kristi Raik further advised not to hurry with the association agreement with Ukraine in the upcoming Vilnius Summit. If Ukraine would be the first country to sign the agreement and if it would do so without fulfilling the necessary conditions, it would give a bad precedence for the future and would undermine the credibility of the Eastern Partnership Program.



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Secondly, Kristi Raik discussed the recent improvement of the 'more for more' principle, which has added the focus on 'money, markets and mobility' to it. While she completely agreed with the application of the 'more for more' principle in case of financial support, she was rather sceptical with the other two. Opening of the markets was discussed in the form of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. It was seen as difficult to legitimize, because it requires complying with strict technical conditions and has high short-term costs, but does not include any membership prospects. When it comes to mobility, Kristi Raik has supported the cause of visa free regime with the neighbouring countries, but not within the lines of 'more for more' principle. According to her, visa free regime is necessary for the citizens and should not be seen as a reward to the political leaders, but rather as a gesture to the populations.

Gunilla Herolf focused on the variation within the EU towards the Eastern Partnership. She discussed three aspects related to individual stands of European countries. Gunilla Herolf firstly claimed that one of the main factors, dividing the views on the Eastern Partnership was countries' location. Member states, bordering Eastern Partnership countries as well as those with the recent history of Russian supremacy were much more eager to see their neighbours turn into westward looking democracies. Secondly, economic interests play an important role. According to Gunilla Herolf, Eastern Partnership initiative creates competition between the Eastern neighbours and the Black Sea Region countries in the South. Finally, the speaker analyzed the recent positive change in Germany's attitude towards integration of Eastern partners. Even though Germany's opinion is highly differentiated among individual partner countries, it has strengthened the Eastern Partnership initiative as such. In conclusion Gunilla Herolf noted that the perception of Eastern Partnership was much more complicated due to differing opinions toward the issue among and even within EU countries. However, referring to the previous speakers she agreed that the development of the Eastern Partnership initiative lied most heavily on the partner countries and their will to cooperate.

SESSION 3: HOW COMMON IS THE ENERGY POLICY?

The speakers of the third session were Jaroslav Neverovič, Minister of Energy of the Republic of Lithuania, Andres Mäe, Independent Analyst from Estonia, Alan Riley, Professor at the City University of London and Andris Sprūds, Director of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs. The session was opened by the remarks of the chair Romas Švedas, Lecturer at IIRPS, Vilnius University. He noted that energy policy is the most important topic for Lithuania today, as it continues to be an energy island within the EU. Moreover, he stressed the broader importance of the energy issue, highlighting the fine line between geopolitical interests and energy projects, which can be used to satisfy the former.

Jaroslav Neverovič outlined the historical background behind the common energy policy aims. The very beginning of the European integration was linked to the issues of energy, signified by the creation of European Coal and Steel Community or the establishment of European Atomic Energy Community. However, energy policy has remained a prerogative of each member state until very recently. The Minister discussed the birth of the EU common energy policy. He elaborated on key events of its recent development, from the meeting of Informal European Council at Hampton court in 2005, in which the very concept had been approved, to the Lisbon Treaty, in which the Solidarity Clause in matters of energy supply had been installed. He concluded that some significant steps had been taken in creating the common energy policy in the past seven years. However, the field is still dominated by member states' competence and inter-governmental cooperation.

Secondly, Jaroslav Neverovič addressed the issue in the context of the Lithuanian EU Council Presidency. Completing the Common European Energy Market and strengthening the external



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energy policy were stressed as the main goals in the field, which could bring benefits to the whole Europe. Several events will be dedicated to achieving these goals.

Andres Mäe discussed how common the energy policy is in the Baltic Sea region, comparing the three Baltic States. He stated that the main goals should be the diversification of the sources of supply and integration of markets. However, the biggest importance was assigned to specific objects, such as an LNG terminal, which need to be realized in order to achieve the broader goals. Andres Mäe also paid greater attention to foreign policy aspects of the energy policy in the region, concerning the role of Russia and the danger of Gazprom monopoly. Finally, he gave a brief overview of the situation in all three Baltic countries. Estonia has focused on creating the open market, but did so at expense of the consumer protection. Latvia, on the contrary, has failed to initiate any new projects due to especially high protection of customer interests. Lithuania has mostly concentrated on energy independence, initiating as many as five projects, out of which it might be able to finish only a few.

Alan Riley has outlined the main factors, which could affect European Climate Change Policy and EU Common Energy Policy as well as the consequences they would have for Lithuania. The shale gas revolution in the United States has been identified as one of the key factors, having massive geostrategic consequences for the global energy market. The geopolitical prognosis, presented by Alan Riley, forecasted that the emergence of the US as an energy sources, especially, gas supplier would decrease the influence of Russia and other major players in the field and potentially get Europe off the fiscal rocks. On the other hand, it would cause a need to reconfigure the Climate Change Policy to low fossil fuel price world. The previous assumption that the supply of oil is coming to an end no longer serves as an incentive to invest in renewables. The consequences could be felt in Lithuania as well, which also has some shale resources. It would allow for greater diversity of energy sources of supply and would make it hard for Russia to sustain such high prices for gas exports.

Andris Sprūds commented on the ideas expressed by the previous speakers. He firstly addressed the historic development of the EU Common Energy Policy, stressing the amount of work that had been done in the last ten years, since the 2004 EU enlargement. He also added that with the Lisbon Treaty serving as a high point in the development of the European energy policy, a public fatigue could be felt regarding the issue. Secondly, responding to the remarks of Prof. Alan Riley, the speaker suggested a more careful approach to future developments, noting that the use of shale gas was still at a beginning stage. He also emphasized that the comeback of the use of gas posed a threat to further research on and employment of renewable resources. Finally, Andris Sprūds observed, that the political issues were still of crucial importance with regards to energy policy.

SESSION 4: ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE REFORMS

The panel was comprised of five speakers: Petras Auštrevičius, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Lithuania, Ingrida Šimonytė, former Minister of Finance of Lithuania, Jonas Čičinskas, Professor at IIRPS, Vilnius University, Iain Begg, Professorial Research Fellow at the London School of Economics and Political Science, TEPSA Board Member and András Inotai, Research Professor at the Institute for World Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, TEPSA Board Member. The chairperson of the session, Hanna Ojanen, Visiting Researcher at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, TEPSA Board Member, presented the members of the panel and introduced to the main questions of the session. The discussion was expected to evolve around the economic crisis, directly or indirectly touching upon various implications of it. Do big problems mean getting through big reforms? Does the crisis overshadow all the other aspects or are we moving towards a major reform, touching all the aspects?



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Petras Auštrevičius gave an overview of the Lithuanian response to the crisis and its ambitions to join the Eurozone. He expressed his views on the general path to be taken in determining the economic governance of the EU, supporting strong austerity and more fiscal control in times of crisis and a stronger budgetary surveillance, greater fiscal coordination and stronger compliance with the rules of the Eurozone membership. He also expressed high expectations for the Lithuanian Presidency and highlighted the upcoming parliamentary conference on economic governance to be hosted by Lithuania. The discussions in that conference should help answer the prominent question of the extent to which parliaments should be involved in deciding over the economic policies in Europe.

Ingrida Šimonytė provided with an evaluation of the economic governance and fiscal reforms that had recently taken place in the EU. Focusing on the changes to the European Semester, the former Minister expressed her approval of the changed timing within the mechanism, which allowed the recommendations of the European Commission to be considered in the national parliaments. Moreover, she noted that the current emphasis on public debt was a positive improvement, which might prevent the countries from entering the vicious cycle of ever increasing public debt. In addition to that, she explained how economic governance reforms needed to look beyond fiscal deficit and public debt and focus on the long-term economic and financial stability. Finally, she stated that in the end, the effectiveness of any reform lied on its enforcement rather than the sheer number or even the content of legal acts adopted. However, she emphasized that it was still too early to assess the effects of the changes regarding the European semester and that first the “good times” had to come to be able to do so.

Jonas Čičinskas discussed both sides of the debate regarding the need for a political union and federalism for the economic union. He stated that once the monetary union was created, the need for a fiscal union and banking union was brought up only by the crisis. However, what fiscal union implies is fiscal federalism and strong economic policy centralization. The view, supporting such union has been established in a recent Blueprint for a Deep and Genuine Economic and Monetary Union, published by the European Commission. The Professor discussed this paper, concluding that the Blueprint would effectively give the role of the EU economic government to the European Commission. On the other hand, he stressed, such initiatives could also be seen as dangerous illusions, which symbolize a too simplistic and mechanistic approach to the European project.

Iain Begg started off with discussing the state of the banking sector and possible approaches to its failures. He then moved to the analysis of the Blueprint on Genuine and Deep EMU. According to Iain Begg, the project suggests relevant changes in four different spheres, which in the end consist of some elements of a Banking Union, some elements of a fiscal union and a rather ambiguous common economic policy framework. The speaker described the main trends in the field. Firstly, there has been a shift towards stricter and wider regulation as the number of rules to control the economic activity within the EU proliferated. Secondly, the European Commission is gaining enormous powers, which can be exercised through such instruments as the European Semester or the Fiscal Compact. Moreover, the divergence of crisis management trends throughout Europe makes it increasingly difficult to come up with a single policy for all. Finally, according to Iain Begg, the final task is the legitimization of these new processes in the increasingly resentful and euro-sceptical societies.

András Inotai focused on the stages of the Euro crisis and the analysis of its causes as well as possible solutions. He traced the evolvement of the crisis from financial to macroeconomic and from social to mental, leading to anti-EU behaviour. Despite the critical harm caused, the crisis has triggered an enormous progress in developing an institutional framework within the EU. However, the policies have been a reaction to the markets so far. András Inotai emphasized that there was a need to initiate the reforms that would change the markets rather than adapt to



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them. He continued by analyzing the roots of the Euro crisis, which lied in three main presumptions, prominent at the time of the birth of the EMU. The first one was the belief that the political union would automatically follow the monetary one. Secondly, there was hope that the countries would be forced to fiscal harmonization and discipline. Both of the presumption proved false. Finally, common interest rates of different countries served as the last push to the crisis. In the end, the speaker discussed the possible solutions and future scenarios together with the main cleavages, which could determine the course of future development. The increasing tension between France and Germany as well as the growing anti-European sentiment in many societies were listed among the main cleavages to be feared of. The choices of non-Eurozone countries vis-à-vis the new institutional framework were added to the list. Together with that, the old discrepancies between the North and the South as well as between the old and the new member states are likely to drive the future development.

SESSION 5: CHALLENGE OF DIFFERENTIATION IN THE EU

There were three speakers at the last session: Gediminas Vitkus, Professor at IIRPS, Vilnius University, Ahto Lobjakas, Analyst at the Estonian Foreign Policy Institute and Funda Tekin, Research Associate at the Institut für Europäische Politik, Berlin.

The Chairperson Gianni Bonvicini, Executive Vice-President at the Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome, TEPSA Board Member, gave an introduction on the origins of the principle of differentiation. He firstly related the issue to flexibility, which allowed each country to act upon their will and ability. Secondly, Gianni Bonvicini continued by raising the main questions for the session, which evolved around the relationship between countries that participate in the integrated core and the non-Eurozone countries. The main aspects of such relationship are governance and legitimacy of such governance and the means to maintain integrity within the EU. Finally, Gianni Bonvicini related to the recommendations to the Lithuanian Presidency, emphasizing the necessity to reaffirm the respect for the *acquis communautaire* and maintain institutional solidarity.

Gediminas Vitkus reminded that the word differentiation was important for the EU from the very beginning. The problem of differentiation is quite a natural element of EU reality; it is impossible to achieve full integrity among countries with such different capabilities, interests and experience. The speaker claimed that the EU itself was a quite contradictory project and some kind of differentiation was inevitable. He discussed the two opposing views on differentiation: the one, seeing it as inevitable and necessary to some extent, and the other, seeing it as a danger, which might lead to the erosion of the EU. However, Gediminas Vitkus stressed that these two competing approaches had the same denominator – the concept of limits. He further noted that when dealing with criteria of differentiation, two things must be taken into account: legal harmonization and legitimacy. Legal harmonization requires some changes in understanding various aspects from purely legal set-up of the Union to political, cultural and identity issues in member states. Secondly, legitimacy is endangered by increased differentiation, because the ever more complicated system becomes incomprehensible for the citizens and thus less trusted upon. Finally, Gediminas Vitkus summarized that the core of the EU was the search for common ideas and principles, which need to be implemented with clarity towards the member states' populations.

Ahto Lobjakas discussed the issue of differentiation within the EU in the light of two concepts: legitimacy and solidarity. According to him, there is an increasing tension between the rules or laws on the one hand and democracy and popular will on the other. As a result, legitimation and abiding by the rules of the EU are becoming increasingly difficult to achieve. Ahto Lobjakas suggested that the main division in the EU was not between the euro and non-euro countries, but between those, who abided by the rules, and those, who did not. This leads, according to him,



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to the issue of solidarity, which seems to be questioned in the EU in the light of the current crisis. In the end the EU might need to redefine what solidarity is and what it means to be European.

Funda Tekin addressed the questions to the extent of differentiation in the EU right now and the challenges it might cause in the future. According to her, differentiated integration is not a problem itself. On the contrary, it is what makes the EU operable. However, the challenges lie in the future management of the issue. Firstly, Funda Tekin stressed the need to “tame” the differentiation, i.e. to uphold the belief that solidarity is essential and to prevent countries from cherry-picking the regulations they like. This was discussed in the context of the speech of UK Prime Minister, James Cameron earlier this year, in which he advocated for repatriation of competences. Secondly, Funda Tekin noted that with the increasing differentiation, implementation of an institutional solution has become inevitable.

CLOSING REMARKS

Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, Director of IIRPS, Vilnius University, reflected upon the evolution of Lithuanian EU Presidency priorities. A couple of years ago a list of Presidency priorities were adopted in the Lithuanian Parliament. It included such issues as Eastern Partnership, Energy Security, Border Management and the Baltic Sea Strategy, all of which reflected direct interests of Lithuania. However, according to Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, as the Presidency was approaching, increasingly more emphasis was shifted towards the issues, being debated on the EU level. Finally, at the start of the Presidency, Lithuania has three priorities: credible, growing and open Europe. Ramūnas Vilpišauskas noted, that such a change reflected both, the changing situation within the EU, as well as a shift to a more mature understanding of what the Presidency of the EU Council actually meant in Lithuania. The speaker continued by summarizing the discussions of the Conference. He noted that some of the topics covered were of greater importance to Lithuania and the Baltic Sea Region, but the matters of EU importance were also touched upon.

Finally, Ramūnas Vilpišauskas discussed the internal situation of the country and Lithuania’s preparation. Starting with the role of the President of Lithuania, who has decided to act as a face of the Presidency, he continued by expressing his satisfaction with the public administration officials, who were competent and well prepared. However, he was worried about the performance of the newly formed government top officials – the ministers and vice ministers, who were new to politics after coming to the Government just half a year ago and therefore might lack experience in EU affairs and have disadvantages in informal networking. Finally, he acknowledged the importance of external factors, which might heavily influence the course of the Presidency.

Wolfgang Wessels, TEPSA Chairperson, discussed the Presidency of the EU Council from a broader perspective. He firstly elaborated on the significance of various crises, which inevitably accompanied each Presidency. According to him, they are often unexpected and define the urgent tasks for the period. However, even if crises pose a challenge, they also lead to further integration. Moreover, the crisis management is closely linked to the question of legitimacy for Europe and, most of all, for the country in charge of the Presidency. Wolfgang Wessels believed that the Presidency was especially good for small countries, because it “put them on the map” and showed their ability to solve big problems just as efficiently as the bigger countries could.

In addition to that, Wolfgang Wessels discussed other aspects of legitimacy. He expressed his belief that the EU was solid and rather united for the time being. Finally, he ended his speech by linking the Lithuanian priority of credibility to the broader question of legitimacy and stressed the need to ensure that the rules we had created within the EU were being followed and respected.



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