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Special Issue “Enlargement of the European Union”

Dear readers,

Let me introduce this special edition of our newsletter which focuses on the issue of enlargement of the European Union. On 1st May, 10 new member countries (including the Czech Republic) celebrated 5 years since their entry to the EU. However, Balkan states are already waiting in front of the ‘European gates’ and other countries are slowly approaching them. Therefore, consider this issue not only as an evaluation of the policy of the ‘Eastern enlargement’, but also a discussion of its future perspective. We believe that the following lines will enhance your knowledge of the recent development surrounding the EU enlargement.

*On behalf of the European Programme of the Association for International Affairs,
Karel Ulík*



**Zastoupení
Evropské komise
v České republice**

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From Membership to Presidency: 5 Years of the Czech Republic in the European Union
Michal Thim

Five years ago the Czech Republic and nine other countries (predominantly former Eastern bloc countries) became EU member states. This was undoubtedly a historical milestone for both the states concerned and the receiving organization. The Union has gone through the largest

enlargement in its entire history and such an enlargement wave will hardly be repeated. For the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and other countries, entering the EU represents the culmination of a long process of crucial political, social and economic changes, which were topped by entering NATO and EU. The period before the entry can certainly be considered a success story, but is that also the case of the five years of the Czech Republic's functioning as one of the member states? A period symbolically marked by the Czech Presidency of the EU?

The last five years have not been a particularly calm period for the Union. Enthusiasm has been replaced with the syndrome of "enlargement fatigue" and the first draft of the treaty which had the ambition to call itself European Constitution, was swept by referendums in the Netherlands and France. Thanks to Václav Klaus, who likes to style himself as a prominent EU critic without trying to distinguish personal views and positions of the head of state he represents on the outside, the Czech Republic has gained the label of a eurosceptic country right from the beginning. That is the media image of the Czech Republic from Brussels perspective, which does not seem to brighten soon thanks to the problems concerning the ratification of the reformative Lisbon Treaty.

From the point of view of EU external relations (a term which realistically encompasses the so far in fruitless efforts to introduce a common foreign policy) the entry came at a time of division between "old" and "new" Europe concerning Europe's stance on US invasion in Iraq, which has only strengthened certain disillusion of the original "fifteen" about the enlargement. The "New" EU has changed its face substantially and one of the consequences are the more strained relations with Russia, which is not particularly happy about losing its influence in Central Europe. At the same time EU new countries including the Czech Republic belong to the staunchest critics of the situation in Russia and its foreign policy. Shortly, the EU is going through an important passage and the CR is a part of the process. It has proved that it is a full-value and competent member during the first half of its Presidency, a period which certainly belongs to the more complicated ones.

Balkans' Thorny Path to the EU

Václav Bacovský

Similarly to the situation before 2004 when the Union dealt with the process and speed of approximation of former Eastern bloc countries, a heated debate on the same question concerning the Balkans' countries now takes place in the EU. In spite of the proclaimed success of the "Eastern" enlargement, the mood in member countries is not in favour of further enlargement. Statements heard from Germany indicate that after Croatia's admissions, to which public opinion is the most in favour, a longer intermission in enlargement will follow. French diplomats even threaten to stop enlargement entirely in case the Lisbon Treaty is not accepted. The countries of Benelux or Spain share a similar position while the entire process is complicated by bilateral disputes of Cyprus, Greece and Slovenia.

Croatia, which has according to the resolution of the European Parliament reached favourable results in 2008 (among others in the fields of women protection, minorities' rights or refugees return), is closest to the European door. A more significant progress needs to be reached in the fields of justice, fight with corruption and reform of state administration. More helpfulness towards

the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia is also expected. To the top of it, accession is complicated by the Slovene Croatian border dispute. Therefore the Czech Presidency had to put off the accession conference of EU – Croatia several times (last time to 26 June), without which a successful finish of accession talks will not be possible this year.

Macedonia has also been a candidate country since 2005. However, this country which is key for the stability of the entire region is burdened with disputes with all neighbours. In spite of the careful acclaim it has been awarded by the EU for progress in 2008, accession talks have not started yet. It is also possible that these would be blocked by Greece, which has already blocked Macedonia's entry in NATO last year. Application was also submitted by Montenegro at the end of the last year. However the Commission has not confirmed its candidate status yet, even though it was asked to do so by the April Council following the initial hesitance of Germany and Benelux countries. Accession talks could begin in the following year.

Further Enlargement is not Going to Take Place without Lisbon

Václav Nekvapil

After the last wave of enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and 2007 the number of new members has almost doubled. Since 1993 the term 'absorption capacity' (which first appeared in connection with the so called 'Copenhagen criteria') has been used rather at a theoretical level. However, at the present we are experiencing its true meaning. The rushed acceptance especially of Bulgaria raises the question of how should the EU deal with its youngest member, which doesn't respect the 'club rules'. This doesn't mean, though, that all old members are well-behaved; let's just remind ourselves of the 'creativity' that Greece demonstrated when fulfilling the Maastricht criteria. What is being suggested here is the fact that these countries are not as easily monitored as the younger members.

The current situation further deteriorated due to the failure of the French strategy. This strategy suggested an institutional transformation of the EU which was supposed to be a pre-requisite for further acceptance of new members. Dilemma between 'enlargement vs. deepening' was resolved by new candidate states urging a prompt admission to the EU in order to acquire the possibility of influencing future shape of the EU as its full members. Hence, the greater is now the disillusion of the French who are most bewildered by the fact that Czechs and Poles, in particular, have significantly strengthened the eurosceptic core of the EU, for them out of somewhat incomprehensible sovereignistic reasons.

The vision of a further enlargement of the EU is for now very obscure. The newly established institution of candidate states which includes such diverse countries like Croatia, Macedonia a Turkey seems to be of a big concern for the Union. The created 'waiting list' represents a hurdle also for Ukraine, Serbia and Moldavia whose prospects are as unclear as the ones of the official candidates (with the exception of Croatia).

What once was the primary focus of the EU foreign policy is now a mere disappointment. Feeble attempts to develop a Union for the Mediterranean on one side and Eastern Partnership on the other are pointless without an inner agreement (such as for example the Lisbon Treaty) about the

shape and the size of the European expansion. It is essential that the EU defines what it aims to represent in order for its neighbours to know why they should become its members.

Comments on Recent Events

Turkey hears more than just 'nein' and 'non' from the EU

During the visit of the Turkish President, Abdullah Gül, in Prague on 29th April the Czech President, Vaclav Klaus, have once again expressed his support for the Turkish membership in the EU. His opinion is for a change in compliance with the long-term position of the Czech foreign policy. Neither the Czech Presidency nor the government of Great Britain or Italy agree with the negative stance of France and Germany towards the potential Turkish membership in the Union, something that also the American President Barack Obama came across during his visit in Europe. However, the reluctance of some European countries is not the only obstacle hindering Turkey's entry to the EU. Another reason is also its prolonged inability to adapt to the accession criteria.

International arbitrage: a possible reconciliation of the Croatian – Slovenian dispute

Luxembourg, 27th April - the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) called on Slovenia and Croatia to accept the proposal of the European Commission to resolve their border dispute through an independent international arbitrage. Slovenia decided to block its neighbour's entry to the EU due to the claim for part of the bay of Piran that Slovenia raised a while ago. Using membership as a coercive tool against candidate states has been recently observed also in the case of Greece and Cyprus.

Albanian roads lead to the West

On 28th April Albanian Prime Minister, Sali Berisha, with the assistance of the Czech Presidency officially submitted country's application for EU candidacy status. Whilst at the end of 1990s the country was threatened by an imminent collapse of its state administration which was owing to the interference of international troops prevented at last; at the present Albania seeks to take up on its previous successful admission to NATO by aspiring to become a member of the EU. Albania is the second 'Muslim' country after Turkey which decided to make such a move.

Interviews for PREDSEDNICTVI.CZ

The Czech Presidency has aimed to finalize negotiations with Croatia. Is it still going to achieve this goal?

"Due to a border dispute Croatia's entry to the EU is at the present being blocked by its neighbour, Slovenia. However, such an incident is nothing new. Our entry was hindered, for example, by the Austrians, who were demanding our promise to commit to certain regulations concerning operations of the nuclear power plant, Temelin. It is true, that every country involved in a dispute is aspiring to strengthen its position as a negotiator. To ignore the current situation however, would be foolish as there are more countries yet to enter the EU (Balkan states in particular) and the

challenges that have to be overcome are many. Nevertheless, it is essential to keep the process alive. With regards to the dispute between Croatia and Slovenia I am expecting a break-through still this year. “

Alexandr Vondra, outgoing Deputy Prime Minister for EU Affairs, 27th April 2009.

What does Georgia expect from the European Partnership programme?

“We are expecting encouragement and support from the EU which will help us stay on the right track towards building a democracy. From my point of view the Eastern Partnership programme could significantly contribute to the process of integration in the sphere of economy, energetics and safety. We expect the programme to help us develop closer and more complex cooperation with the EU.”

Nina Nakashidze, the Georgian ambassador in the Czech Republic, 4th May 2009.

How do you see the current political will in the EU for further enlargement?

“I think that three categories of countries will emerge – countries, on which the Union will agree that should be in the EU, for example Croatia. Then those on which we will not pronounce yet, which will be the case of Ukraine, which is backed by an influential group of countries led by Great Britain. To this group Prodi’s “The door is neither open nor closed,” will apply. And then there will be the group on which the Eastern countries will say “We will agree that there will be no further enlargement, to let’s say Turkey, but in turn for that you will not get significantly engaged against it.” So I can imagine that Croatia is accepted, then perhaps some countries of the Eastern Partnership and that’s it.”

Petr Kratochvíl, Deputy Director, Institute of International Relations, 6th May 2009.

The complete interviews can be found on: www.predsednictvi.cz.

Interesting Publications

European Commission

On the fifth anniversary of the biggest enlargement in history of the EU the European Commission published a report „Five years of an enlarged EU: Economic achievements and challenges“, focusing primarily on the evaluation of the enlargement’s economic impact on its member states. The authors claim that none of the initial concerns about the expansion of the EU were fulfilled. Moreover, they came to the conclusion that the 2004 enlargement was a big contribution for both old as well as new EU members.

Institut Français des Relations Internationales

The publication „The Fifth Enlargement of the EU, Five Years On: The Case of Poland and the Czech Republic“, discusses the impact of the enlargement on the political dimension of the EU. According to the author, the enlargement in 2004 didn’t bring any significant changes (except of a greater emphasis on Eastern Europe). On the contrary, the 10 new member states have been adapting so quickly that the concept of ‘new member states’ loses its meaning.

Centre for European Policy Studies

The special report „[Safeguarding the Rule of Law in an Enlarged EU: The Cases of Bulgaria and Romania](#)“, investigates and assesses the mechanisms through which the EU monitors and reinforces the rule of law at the level of member states. Furthermore, the study compares the options of the EU with the tools of the Council of Europe and the UN and looks for a more effective way of reinforcing the rule of law in the EU.

Trans European Policy Studies Association

The publication „[The European Neighbourhood Policy: Challenges and Prospects](#)“, prepared in cooperation with the European Parliament analyses the achievements of the European neighbourhood policy. This policy regulates relations between EU and its neighbouring countries without any potential for admission to the EU in near future. The study advises to better distinguish between the needs of individual partner countries and calls for a greater.

It Was Said in the European Union

"Without the Lisbon Treaty, the EU cannot move ahead with enlargement."

French Minister of Foreign Affairs Bernard Kouchner during the meeting of Gymnich at the Hluboka chateau, March 28. [More](#)

"I think we have got to make the argument that the European Union should learn from its history and its history is that wider makes stronger."

British Foreign Secretary David Miliband during the meeting of Gymnich, March 28. [More](#)

"I have been working hand in hand with President Obama but when it comes to the European Union it is up to member states of the European Union to decide."

The retort of French President Nicolas Sarkozy addressed to Barack Obama's support of Turkish membership in the EU at the EU-USA summit in Prague, April 6. [More](#)

"We have Croatia and its accession talks in our sights. But we must also first see that, with the Lisbon treaty, we hopefully get a certain consolidation phase in terms of integration."

German Prime Minister Angela Merkel at the CDU conference, April 17. [More](#)

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Project Coordinator: Karel Ulík Secretary: Lenka Ryjáčková Mini-analyses: Václav Bacovský, Václav Nekvapil, Michal Thim Comments on Recent Events: Daniel Šitera Interviews: Sylvie Milerová, Vladka Votavová Publications: Karel Ulík It was said in EU: Daniel Šitera Corrections: Lenka Ryjáčková Translations: Sylvie Milerová (coordinator), Tereza Pigová Professional Editing: Václav Bacovský, Vít Dostál, Karel Ulík Graphic Layout: Side2 Template: Petr Netuka Composition: Josef Vomáčka Office Contact: newsletter.ep@amo.cz

Association for International Affairs (AMO) Žitná 27, 110 00 Praha 1 Tel./Fax: +420 224 813 460 E-mail: info@amo.cz / www.amo.cz
