



AGENDA FOR CZECH FOREIGN POLICY 2016

— Ed. —

Vít Dostál



Asociace
pro mezinárodní
otázky
Association
for International
Affairs

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List of Abbreviations

ANO	ANO 2011
AV ČR	Czech Academy of Sciences
CEFC	China Energy Company Limited
COP21	Framework Convention on Climate Change
CZ V4 PRES	Czech Presidency in the Visegrad Group
ČSSD	Czech Social Democratic Party
EFSM	European Financial and Stabilization Mechanism
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
EU	European Union
EU ETS	EU Emissions Trading System
FDC	Foreign Development Cooperation
GNP	Gross National Product
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
KDU-ČSL	Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party
KIAT	Korea Institute for Advancement of Technology
KIETEP	Korea Institute of Energy Technology Evaluation and Planning
MEDEVAC	Programme of Humanitarian Evacuations of Inhabitants with Health Issues
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODS	Civic Democratic Party
SDGS	Sustainable Development Goals
TAČR	Technology Agency of the Czech Republic
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
V4	Visegrad Group
V4 EU BG	Visegrad EU Battle Group

Audit of Recommendations in 2015

Success Rate

50%

1. The government must coordinate its position on key foreign policy issues. Diametrically opposing statements on the crisis in Ukraine, the security situation, human rights policy or entry into the euro area make the Czech Republic an untrustworthy and unreliable player. Closer coordination is necessary, especially within ČSSD. Realistically however, we cannot expect too much cooperation from the President and Minister of Finance. It is therefore important so that at least the ministers of the party with the greatest influence on foreign policy speak with one voice. The Prime Minister should abandon his cautious approach on key issues and clearly support his Foreign Minister.

The party congress in March, where opponents of Zaorálek's foreign policy, in particular Jaroslav Foldyna and Jeroným Tejc, were defeated, has calmed the situation within the ČSSD down. However, the reason for their defeat was not an intra-party debate on foreign policy. Disputes were thus swept under the carpet rather than resolved. Foreign policy, security and European policy issues, combined with the growing European refugee crisis led to the emergence of new strong players. Milan Chovanec and Andrej Babiš have both emphasized the security aspect of the refugee crisis, irrespective of its social aspects or its possible impact on other foreign policy priorities. Towards the end of the year, Prime Minister Sobotka also began to issue stronger statements regarding foreign policy. The government did manage to reach consensus on questions of Eastern policy, but has not been able to do so with respect to the refugee crisis due to diverging opinions.

→ **40% successful**

2. The government should distance itself more strongly from the President's views on the Ukrainian crisis and the Islamic State, as well as other potential faux pas. The President is currently the most problematic figure in Czech foreign policy and we cannot expect his excesses, which are damaging to the Czech Republic, to be solved by simple coordination meetings. The government should therefore constantly, positively, and objectively show that Prague Castle's position is political folklore and not the position of the Czech Republic. Again, it is primarily the Prime Minister who is lacking in this regard. The Minister of Foreign Affairs should remain objective and avoid emotional responses such as his press statement after Zeman's speech at the commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz.

In addition to the Ukrainian crisis, the President also addressed the topic of immigration in 2015. In this regard, we must applaud Prime Minister Sobotka for his rejection of the base incitement of hostility towards refugees and his praise for Czech volunteers assisting refugees on the Balkan Route. The Prime Minister also expressed

his view in response to Miloš Zeman's trip to Moscow to celebrate Victory Day, when he stated that the visit by the head of state did nothing to change the Czech position on the situation in Ukraine. The government thus openly articulated the difference in its position to that of the President, while staying within the pragmatic realm. On a more disappointing note was the government's consent to Miloš Zeman's trip to China to celebrate the end of the Second World War, or its approval of the signing of a strategic partnership with Azerbaijan.

→ **70% successful**

3. Parliamentary parties should invest in developing expertise in foreign, security, and European policy. In today's world, the Czech Republic cannot afford to be uninformed or make confused statements on key issues. Opposition parties should be better prepared for a possible return to power than was the case, for example, with the Social Democrats. All political parties should avoid the instrumentalization of key issues of national interest in the political struggle.

Parliamentary political parties have increased their activity in matters of foreign and security policy. Foreign policy was the subject of various declarations or resolutions at the congresses and conventions of ČSSD, ODS and KDU-ČSL. TOP 09 addressed foreign policy in its opposition audit. The Communists were also traditionally active. Although ANO 2011 at its congress spoke of greater discussion of platform objectives, including foreign policy, the only result was the selection of Pavel Telička as the party spokesperson for this area. Any statements regarding international events thus remained in the domain of individual representatives, not the movement as a whole.

In this context, it's a pity that the Czech foreign policy concept approved in July did not call for an annual presentation of foreign policy priorities by the minister to the Chamber of Deputies, to be followed by parliamentary discussion. The planned presentation to the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee is a poor substitute in this case.

→ **70% successful**

4. The government should continue its constructive European policy. The Fiscal Pact should be ratified and following the completion of impact studies, a decision should be made on joining the banking union. The government should approve the Czech Strategy in the EU and other related documents in the first half of the year – including a concept for the appointment of Czechs to

EU institutions and the Strategic Paper on EU Affairs Communication. If the government's objective is to prepare the nation for a smooth transition to the euro, it must not only meet convergence criteria, but also act appropriately in relation to the public. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare a line of argument and communicate this publicly through the relevant channels of the Office of the Government. It is also important for the benefits of membership to be clearly heard from government parties supporting entry to the euro area.

The government introduced a new Czech Strategy in the EU that did not bring any revolution in priorities for European policy. The main added value of the document was the emphasis it places on the early identification of priorities, and this in the pre-legislative phase. Another positive development was the impact study prepared for the February meeting of the government on the Czech participation in the banking union. The arguments set forth were primarily technical and pragmatic, and the rejection of accession will be re-examined in a year's time. A communication strategy for European affairs was also adopted. However, this step was not accompanied by an adequate increase of funding for this area.

The Fiscal Pact has still not been ratified. Moreover, the Greek crisis has not bolstered support for the adoption of the euro. May's meeting of government representatives regarding the introduction of the common currency in the Czech Republic did not bring any tangible results and any agreement among government parties was complicated by Andrej Babiš's proposal to hold a referendum on the adoption of the euro, and Miloš Zeman's absurd condition that the Czech Republic can join the euro area once Greece exits.

→ **50% successful**

5. The Czech Republic should combine the commemoration of the end of the Second World War with a tribute to the victims of the post-war expulsion of Germans. Such an initiative would be an adequate response to the gesture made by German President Gauck in 2012 in memory of the village of Lidice and it would send the desired signal not only abroad, but above all to Czech society. This commemoration could be inspired by Gauck's visit. It would be a conciliatory and humane gesture with the participation of victims and German or Austrian government representatives. A good option would be a common tribute to the memory of these victims and an expression of regret over some of the greatest excesses of the "wild" phase of expulsion, e.g. in Ústí nad Labem, Postoloprty or Brno.

Czech political leaders avoided the topic and no official commemoration comparable to Gauck's gesture took place. A positive exception was the Deputy Prime Minister

Bělobrádek's visit to Munich, where he was the first Czech politician to visit a Sudeten German home and pay tribute to the victims of expulsion at a local memorial. Of note in this context was Bělobrádek's statement that the gesture was not made in the name of the government, as well as the cautious efforts of Prime Minister Sobotka to maintain a "balanced" position. Although Sobotka managed to praise the Deputy Prime Minister in one remark, he devoted more space to traditional arguments that the expulsion was merely the consequence of Nazi terror. Neither the Prime Minister, President nor Minister of Foreign Affairs therefore sent a desirable signal to Czech society.

In contrast to the pussyfooting at national level, steps were taken by certain cities and towns that positively shaped the nation's image. Brno announced a Year of Reconciliation to honor the memory of all victims of injustice – Czech, German, Jewish and Roma. As part of the initiative, the City Council also approved a Declaration of Reconciliation, commemorating the post-war injustices inflicted on Brno Germans. A similar declaration was issued in Ústí nad Labem, where commemorative events were attended by the local mayor.

→ 50% successful

6. The Czech Presidency in the Visegrad Group should focus on strengthening mutual trust among its members. After a less than auspicious year in 2014, attention should be focused on improving the quality of internal Visegrad contacts – e.g. through more intensive parliamentary cooperation – and furthering cooperation in traditional areas (security policy, Eastern policy, the Western Balkans, energy and security infrastructure). When creating new formats of cooperation in Central Europe, the Czech Republic should promote complementary, rather than duplicate projects, and try to draw Austria closer to the Visegrad Group.

Efforts to strengthen mutual trust between Visegrad Group countries through a realistic and detailed program during the Czech Presidency were disrupted by the stark positions taken by V4 members, particularly Hungary and Slovakia, on the refugee crisis. Although the Czech Republic to a certain extent – especially through Minister Zaorálek – tried to diffuse the growing tension between Western and Central Eastern Europe, the first half of the Czech Presidency mostly resulted in a negative image of Central Europe. In addition, there were no major breakthroughs on traditional issues. In the field of energy cooperation, despite the existence of a common position among Visegrad Prime Ministers, the signals the Czech Republic sent with regard to the Nordstream II project were mixed. It was not possible to secure the operability of the Visegrad EU Battle Group

beyond the end of its mandate in the first half of 2016, and more decisive initiatives regarding Eastern Europe or the Western Balkans did not arise.

In January, the Slavkov format of cooperation with Slovakia and Austria was commenced. Although at first glance it had ambitions to address topics that have traditionally been the domain of the V4 (Eastern policy, the Western Balkans, energy, coordination before European Councils), so far it has not brought any tangible results. It is not even clear if Slovakia, which will be taking up the coordinating role after the Czech Republic, has devoted adequate attention to this cooperation. Considering the newness of this format, its mention in the new foreign policy concept seems a bit premature, especially considering that other similar forums (such as the Central European Initiative) were overlooked.

→ **30% successful**

7. The Czech Republic should be more actively and credibly involved in diplomatic negotiations to resolve the conflict in Ukraine at EU and NATO level. The Czech Republic should take a clear stand on Russian aggressive policy and not question the purpose of implemented EU sanctions. On the contrary, it should support stronger sanctions in the event of a further escalation of the conflict. The Czech Republic should politically support the Ukrainian government and help with all necessary socio-economic reforms. The Czech Republic must be a readily fathomable partner for both Ukraine and its allies. In this context, it is essential to balance the statements and actions of President Zeman and other politicians with sufficiently visible acts by the government and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The government maintained a common line with the rest of the European Union on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in 2015, supporting an extension of sanctions against Russia due to limited progress. It also continued to provide Ukraine with humanitarian and transformation assistance. In general, however, the Czech political scene remained passive, which was evident in the lengthy ratification of the Association Agreement with Ukraine.

Miloš Zeman remained a problem. The President attended the Victory Day celebrations in Moscow and after meeting with Vladimir Putin (in Moscow and again in Beijing in September), he expressed support for termination of the sanctions. Although Ukraine is a priority country according to the export policy and the transformation

cooperation program, there were no symbolic steps such as a visit by the Ukrainian Prime Minister or President to the Czech Republic or of a Czech representative to Ukraine.

→ **40% successful**

8. The Czech Republic should accept a much higher number of refugees from areas in Syria and Iraq affected by the conflict. The humanitarian situation on the ground is untenable, yet Czech capacities are far from full. The reluctance to welcome more refugees runs counter to the basic values of Czech and European foreign policy and damages the image of the Czech Republic abroad. The distorted perception of refugees as a security threat also fuels unnecessary fears and prejudices in society.

In July, the Czech Government decided to voluntarily accept 1,500 refugees, primarily from Greece and Italy, over the next three years. It then unsuccessfully voted against relocation quotas, according to which it is to accept 1,691 refugees from European countries. Unlike other countries, however, it did not declare that it would refuse to implement the adopted resolution. Based on the government's January resolution, children from Syria, accompanied by their families, were treated in the Czech Republic. In December, the government also decided to accept a group of Iraqi Christians. Nevertheless, considering the scope of the humanitarian catastrophe, the number of refugees accepted from third countries continues to lag far behind current commitments, Czech capacities, and humanitarian needs.

Although Prime Minister Sobotka repeatedly warned against spreading the fear of immigrants and its misuse by extremist groups, in Czech political discourse, including statements by government representatives, refugees continue to be viewed primarily as a security threat. When portraying refugees, Czech political elites should also present humanitarian and social aspects of migration, and openly discuss possibilities for their integration into Czech society.

→ **30% successful**

9. The Czech Republic should encourage the revival of the Eastern Partnership Initiative. The Eastern Partnership summit will be held in Riga in 2015, and should present the outlines of a reform of this initiative. The Czech Republic should insist on the separation of the issue of the reform of the Eastern

Partnership from Russian engagement in Eastern Ukraine, and offer further integration prospects for countries that have signed association agreements.

The Eastern Partnership summit in Riga did not result in any breakthrough. The priorities of the Czech Republic were met by the separation of three more advanced and three slower countries. However, nothing more substantial beyond the framework of association agreements was offered to Ukraine, Moldavia and Georgia. The Czech Republic also supported the Polish-Swedish proposal to intensify the initiative introduced at December's meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council.

→ **70% successful**

10. The Czech Republic should firmly support the policy of promoting civil and political rights. The response to contradictions criticized in current policy is a more consistent defense of political rights, both internally and externally. What's more, such a course of actions does not weaken the Czech Republic, particularly when focused on highlighting the incorporation of the universality of human rights in international agreements. Expansion by further dimensions of human rights, i.e. social, environmental or gender rights, may be useful, but only if there is a concurrent increase in human and financial resources, and a corresponding ability to implement such projects by Czech NGOs. Otherwise, such expansion will only be a pretext for weakening the emphasis on civil and political rights.

There were no significant changes in Czech human rights policy in newly adopted policy documents – Czech Foreign Policy Concept and the Concept for Promotion of Human Rights and Transformation Cooperation. There was an emphasis on the universality of human rights and the projection of these rights into all dimensions of foreign policy. The promotion of human rights in an atmosphere of mutual dialogue and respect was also mentioned, while pointing out that human rights must not be abandoned even under less favorable conditions. Such a formulation indicates a gradual neutralization of the original aim and remains unclear.

The declared expansion of Czech interest in the inclusion of other dimensions of human rights (especially 2nd and 3rd generation rights) was not accompanied by an increase in funding for this area.

→ **50% successful**

**Futile Search for a
Strategic Dimension:
Czech Foreign Policy
in 2015**

In last year's edition of Agenda for Czech Foreign Policy, we expressed the view that 2015 would be at least as challenging and unpredictable as 2014. Our assumptions proved to be truer than we had feared. In response to international events, society has become disconcerted and the political elite lack the necessary insight and strategic composure. In 2015, the Czech Republic was unable to find appropriate response to a number of pressing and long-term foreign policy issues.

Society

The Czech Republic is enjoying good economic growth, unemployment is at a minimum, and despite some occasional bickering, the government is very stable. Satisfaction with economic development is also evident in society. According to public opinion polls, people believe today's economic situation to be in the best shape in the last 15 years. This positive trend is also reflected in how people view their personal situations, as they report a steady improvement in the standard of living of their own households. It is no surprise then that polls show the current government comfortably winning a majority in Parliament.

However, the view of the mood in society also has a much darker side. The public has perhaps never been as sensitive in its perception of international affairs as it is today. For the past two years, its attention has been focused on the events in Eastern Europe in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the Middle East due to the rise of ISIL. Last year, interest in the refugee crisis surpassed any previous foreign policy event. However, a more detailed look at public opinion polls shows that society views refugees as a security threat and is decidedly against their acceptance. A related trend is the significant decline in sympathy towards other countries. According to poll results, Czechs view Western European countries more negatively, with Germany experiencing the greatest decline in popularity. On the other hand, the popularity of Poland, Russia, Hungary and China have all increased. Support for EU membership fell dramatically, while the prevailing opinion is that the Czech Republic is merely an object buffeted by international events, and can do very little to control its own destiny.

Isolationist tendencies are growing in society, while conspiracy theories abound. The public has become critical of the tenets of post-November foreign policy, namely integration and the removal of barriers, the cultivation of relations with Western European partners, and strengthening human rights and humanitarian aspects. The conviction that the well-being of our society goes hand in hand with the implementation of these principles is losing support.

Politics

The political elite have not been able to offer society a coherent and clear answer. In recent years, they have neglected strategic thinking on foreign policy,

relegating these questions to the bureaucratic apparatus. We are now painfully confronted with this stagnation of foreign policy thinking, as today's politicians are confused and disoriented in crisis situations.

The President can once again be considered the main problem of Czech foreign policy. Zeman attended the Victory Day celebrations in Moscow and was the sole head of state of an EU Member State present at the military revue commemorating the end of the Second World War in Beijing. In both cases, after meeting with Vladimir Putin, he promoted lifting the sanctions against the Russian Federation, regardless of the fact that conditions for doing so had not been met. The President also found a new issue in the refugee crisis. His statements, however, were devoid of the slightest shred of humanity. Insults of other cultures and religions, not the interest in helping those in need took precedence. In addition, the head of state closed the doors of Prague Castle to the American ambassador, and due to his own ignorance reprimanded the Polish President for Poland's vote on mandatory quotas for the resettlement of refugees. In short, the President's conduct significantly damages the reputation of our country abroad.

As a result, it may be said that aside from the issues where the President and government agree, and matters handled along parallel diplomatic lines, a third dimension of foreign policy has arisen where the head of state goes directly against the government's position. This phenomenon has existed since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in 2014 and nothing indicates the situation will change anytime soon. Last year the cabinet continued seeking a *modus vivendi* with Miloš Zeman in areas where there was a likelihood one could be found. On the other hand, it opposed his destructive activity in areas where the President arbitrarily stepped outside of consensus, for example, in connection with his declarations regarding sanctions against Russia.

In 2015, there were regular meetings of the highest government officials on foreign policy. The fact that the central figures formulating Czech diplomacy are interested in meeting is undoubtedly good news. It also turned out there are numerous issues on which they agree, although it is evident that foreign policy declarations bear the mark of the lowest common denominator. However, there are many areas where a consensus has yet to be found.

The refugee crisis created a clear schism in the government, permeating through all parties.

The March congress of the Czech Social Democrats was a clear success for the Sobotka and Zaořálek camp, while the most vocal critics of the government's foreign policy (Jeroným Tejc and Jaroslav Foldyna) were unsuccessful. Minister of the Interior Chovanec became a strong voice speaking out on international affairs last year, opposing the humanitarian view of the refugee crisis that was

advocated by Jiří Dienstbier, among others. Quarrels within ČSSD on migration only highlighted the disunity of the party on foreign policy. There was still a visible split between the European social democrat wing and the dubitable national conservative orientation. It was not until the second half of the year that the Prime Minister began to more forcefully shape foreign policy, all the while distancing himself from the President – especially in his view of refugees – and to a considerable degree even silencing his Minister of the Interior.

ČSSD's coalition partners fared no better. The ANO movement was visible thanks to its leader Andrej Babiš, who joined the debate on refugees with some fairly absurd views, furthering social frustration. His voice was not the only one at ANO, as shown by the statements by Minister Pelikán and other deputies of the movement who presented an entirely different view. Mixed opinions were also on record within KDU-ČSL.

Opposition parties were also more active on foreign policy issues. The topic of Czech foreign policy ultimately permeated all political party conventions, assemblies and congresses that took place in 2015. In the majority of cases, however, the debate focused on the refugee crisis without developing into more strategic thinking.

Strategy

In the past year, a number of strategic texts were adopted. These included both extensive government materials – the Foreign Policy Concept of the Czech Republic, Security Strategy of the Czech Republic, Czech Strategy in the EU, as well as departmental documents such as the Concept for Promotion of Human Rights and Transformation Cooperation or the Communication Strategy for European Affairs.

The Security Strategy of the Czech Republic is an elaborate document that clearly describes the changes in the security environment and ways to promote the interests of the Czech Republic in this area. It must be added that in response to external threats, the government also decided to increase security funding. Incomprehensibly however, part of this funding was not directed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although the strategy emphasized the role of the Foreign Service in ensuring national security.

The Concept of the Czech Republic's Strategy in the EU did not bring any revolutionary changes, which could not have been expected, given the need to find an intersection of interests among coalition parties. At the same time however, it is not a lackluster document that merely summarizes general positions. The paper clearly identifies priorities and above all examines the needs of Czech society in Europe across the board. In an effort to be firmly grounded in Europe, it also addresses other topics that have been neglected in the past,

such as multilingualism, education as it relates to creating a European identity, and the Europeanization of public administration. The document examines the creation of national positions in detail and places an emphasis on discussion of the priorities of Czech European policy.

However, the most attention was understandably focused on the new foreign policy concept. It is clear from the approved document that the original draft, leaked to the media, was gradually watered down. The result of efforts to find common ground between the original intent and the voice of the broader community is normative dilution in key parts of the document. The paper emphasizes a “change in the geopolitical balance of power and a shift towards a multi-polar world order”, but is unable to say how our value system is to come to terms with this as a “member of the Euro-Atlantic area”. While the previous concept clearly claimed that it was in the interest of the Czech Republic to maintain the influence of Euro-Atlantic civilization in creating the world order, the new document leaves this question unanswered. This is not merely an academic discussion, because the formulation of an effective foreign policy strategy is essential to determining the fundamental ideal of international order.

Issues

The main foreign policy issue was clearly the refugee crisis. The Czech approach was in many respects unsystematic and self-absorbed. As already mentioned in the introduction, this is also an issue which attracted enormous public interest, and therefore the way it will be handled will be essential for shaping Czech society in the future.

The Czech Republic has been unable to come to terms with the negative trends that have become evident in recent years. Certain declared strategic relations – such as the relationship with Washington and Warsaw – yielded no meaningful results over the past year. Elsewhere, the Czech Republic attempted to develop strategic relations without really discussing what it wanted to achieve. The expectations with regard to deepening relations with Austria or China are unclear, and the new strategic partnership with autocratic Azerbaijan is difficult to comprehend.

In certain important questions, the Czech Republic remains divided, without any real progress made towards a clear solution during the past year. A typical example is entry to the euro area, where the Czech Republic stubbornly clings to the clichéd “yes, but not until we’re ready”. This is all the more reason to continue communication between the broader foreign policy community and the executive branch which intensified during the initial preparation phase of strategic papers. Likewise, a central role must be played by public diplomacy and efforts aimed at raising public awareness. After all, society is finally taking an interest in international politics! In this context,

it is completely incomprehensible that funding allocated to this area for 2016 was not adequately increased.

However, it is also important to mention some positive trends. The commencement of a strategic dialogue with Germany or the further advance in relations with South Korea must undoubtedly be considered a success for Czech diplomacy. Lastly, it should be noted that the disputes over economic diplomacy between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Industry and Trade have dissipated.

In individual thematic chapters then, we rate Czech foreign policy much more positively than the overall institutional and political framework. This is part of the reason Czech diplomacy received an overall grade of C+, which is a slight improvement over the three previous years when it received a straight C.

Outlook

We do not expect the international situation to be any calmer in 2016. The refugee crisis will continue. The Czech Republic must understand that the mere protection of external Schengen borders will not solve the problem. Naturally, security aspects cannot be ignored, but people fleeing from war cannot be turned away. The Czech Republic may suffer from the deepening rift between Western and Central-Eastern Europe created by the unsuccessful search for a common solution to the refugee crisis. In this respect, Czech diplomacy should primarily focus on relations with Poland and Germany, and keep these from stagnating. Moreover, our northern neighbor will want to listen to us – as its new foreign policy is focused on Central Europe, and Poland will be taking over the Visegrad Presidency mid-year. We should also not forget aggressive Russian policy. The Kremlin will continue to try to systematically change the situation in Europe in their favor and the Czech Republic must help repel these attempts. At the NATO summit in Warsaw, we should contribute to a credible deterrence. Equally important is our support of Ukraine's European aspirations.

Political engagement	C-
Institutional cohesion	D
Strategic vision	D
Proactive approach	D
International relevance	D+

The general trends of Czech foreign policy examined above are further analyzed in greater detail in individual thematic chapters. This is the collaborative work of 16 authors from the Association for International Affairs. In addition to public sources and knowledge acquired from year-round monitoring of the operation of Czech diplomacy, the work also draws on 21 consultations with representatives of key institutions dealing with foreign policy.

Agenda for Czech Foreign Policy 2016 is the 10th edition of this annual and unique publication in the Czech Republic. The latest edition has also seen some changes: we have stopped assigning higher or lower weights to thematic chapters, the analysis of relations with Russia has been moved from the chapter dedicated to key bilateral relations to the chapter devoted to Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, and we have added a section on climate policy. At the beginning of each chapter there is also a comparison of grades awarded since 2012, when we introduced the present grading system.

Grading Methodology

We utilized the grading system, scoring criteria on a scale of A to F (A – excellent, B – commendable, C – good, D – satisfactory, F – unsatisfactory). There were two sections involved in this process:

The introductory chapter concentrates on the following indicators:

- A. **POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT** expresses the willingness of political elites to involve themselves in the issues of foreign policy, to appreciate their importance, to advocate a resolution and not to hold them hostage to unrelated political disputes.
- B. **INSTITUTIONAL COHESION** indicates the coherence of promoting foreign-policy interests among individual institutions (the President, the government) and central authorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Interior, Office of the Government).
- C. **STRATEGIC VISION** is the capacity for a longer-term outlook, the overlap with purely tactical steps and, last but not least, the willingness and boldness to formulate priorities and to efficiently structure foreign policy according to these priorities.
- D. **PROACTIVE APPROACH** indicates an effort to overcome reactive thinking in foreign policy and to consciously influence the international environment, mainly partner states, through our own policy initiatives.
- E. **INTERNATIONAL RELEVANCE** is a category which expresses how strongly Czech politicians and diplomats resonate within the dominant trends moving through international relations, including European policy.

Individual thematic and regional spheres of Czech foreign policy, which are rated in the relevant chapters themselves. Here we looked at four indicators:

- A. **ACTIVITY (30% OF THE GRADE)** is defined as the frequency and scope of particular steps (beginning with acts of rhetoric and ending with signing agreements, dispatching units, etc.) and their effectiveness from the perspective of the functioning of Czech foreign policy. A rating of “excellent” is given to active policy characterised by unforced initiative; “commendable” is the rating used for active

policy in response to international events; “good” is the rating used for limited, predominantly reactive steps with no independent initiative; “satisfactory” is used for a predominantly passive stance and limited activity; and “unsatisfactory” indicates an entirely passive stance by the Czech Republic without any activity at all.

- B. **DETERMINATION (30%)**, or the “seriousness of intent” that accompanies a certain foreign policy activity, i.e. whether it was part of long-term plans, whether it was consistent with previous steps taken, and whether sufficient human and financial resources were allocated for its implementation. An „excellent“ rating was given to strategic action fully based on long-term plans, supported by adequate resources with the involvement of major foreign policy figures; “commendable” was the rating used for activity partly based on long-term plans and supported by limited resources and the majority of key figures; a “good” rating was given to tactical responses at least partially taking existing strategic plans into account and a resource framework with support from the Government of the Czech Republic; a „satisfactory“ rating was given to tactical responses without any long-term context backed by very limited resources and fragmented involvement of key figures, while “unsatisfactory” was used to describe chaotic action not backed by any resources.
- C. **THE IMPACT (20%)**, meaning whether the declared intentions led to the desired results (i.e. if an agreement was signed, a political prisoner released, a source of energy secured). We ascribe a mark of “excellent” when all declared aims were achieved; “commendable” is used when most of the declared aims were achieved; “good” is used when a limited number of declared aims were achieved; “satisfactory” was used when only a few of the declared aims were achieved; and “unsatisfactory” was for situations in which none of the declared aims were achieved.
- D. **NORMATIVE RATING (20%)** gives the subjective view of the authors, which complements the overall view with factors that cannot be clearly defined in the context of the previous categories. This is a qualitative indicator, hard to specify, which is why we have added a brief verbal

assessment for each grade. This grade shows whether we consider the aims, tools and activities in the given area as correct and beneficial.

We reached the final grade shown on the cover of the book in the following way:

- 30% is the rating of sectional indicators in the opening chapter;
- 70% is the weighted average of the ratings of individual areas.

European Policy

<i>Grade</i>			
D+	B-	B-	C+
2012	2013	2014	year 2015

Strategic Dimension of European Policy

Activity	A-
Determination	A-
Impact	B
Normative aspect	C
Final mark	B

The Czech Republic continued its efforts to improve the implementation of its European policy. The primary activity in this area was the drafting and adoption of the Czech Strategy in the EU, which due to its focus on implementation is a document of higher quality than usual by Czech standards. Greater emphasis, however, should be placed on increasing public awareness of European affairs and influencing the public.

In 2015, the government continued its turnaround in European policy. At the end of April, a new Czech Strategy in the EU was adopted. Unlike the preceding document approved by Petr Nečas's cabinet, the new policy paper does not lack a strategic compass, identifies priority areas and sets up implementation.

The document is well prepared, drawing on government and non-government figures including legislators, members of the European Parliament and experts. A positive feature was the selection of five priority areas, which with the exception of the fight against tax evasion, are among the long-term interests of the Czech Republic. The new policy document does not fundamentally alter Czech European policy but clearly determines the accents of the current government. The main added value of the document is its emphasis on the early determination of Czech interests in EU negotiations, and this in the pre-legislative phase. A clear role was also defined for the National Convention on the EU, which began full operation in 2015 and served as a platform for debate on national priorities.

In the second half of the year, the government was confronted by declining public support for EU membership. It is clear that the fall in support for European integration is related to the ongoing refugee crisis. Unfortunately, 2015 saw more politicians who wanted to ride the wave of social frustration. Even the most popular political figures such as Miloš Zeman or Andrej Babiš attacked the EU for its inaction or incompetence in this context.

The government also continued in its effort to increase public awareness of European affairs when it adopted a new communication strategy for European

affairs. However, this step was not accompanied by the necessary increase in funding for this agenda.

Economic and Monetary Union

Activity	B-
Determination	C-
Impact	B-
Normative aspect	C
Final mark	C

The Greek debt crisis and the Five President's Report highlighted the growing rift between the members and non-members of the euro area. The Czech Republic continues to declare its interest in adopting the common currency, yet has taken virtually no practical or conceptual steps in this direction and the government is not even trying to initiate a constructive dialogue on this matter. On the contrary, the Czech Republic has been eclectic in its response to events occurring in the euro area. The approach of the Czech Republic does not reflect the importance of this matter. The only positive development is the attempt to institutionalize professional debate on joining the banking union.

In the first half of the year, the EU mainly focused its attention on the question of Greece staying in the euro area. The agreement concluded at the Euro Summit in July included the provision of guarantees by the European Financial and Stabilization Mechanism (EFSM), of which the Czech Republic is part. Czech protests against this unilateral step were justified to a certain degree, as such a decision should not be made without consulting Member States outside the euro area. Nevertheless, the Czech Republic subsequently agreed to provide the guarantees.

Virtually no progress was made with regard to the possible adoption of the common currency in the Czech Republic and the Greek debt crisis did not encourage support for the rapid introduction of the euro. The May meeting of government dedicated to this issue did not bring any tangible results and any agreement by government parties was complicated by Andrej Babiš's proposal to hold a referendum on the adoption of the euro. Furthermore, in November President Zeman declared the Czech Republic's entry to the euro area should be conditional on a Greek exit, which not only insulted Czech partners in the EU

and NATO, but also made a sovereign Czech decision subordinate to the decision of the euro area and Greece.

At EU level, the Five President's Report: Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union was released at the end of June. The Czech Republic contributed to the preparation of the document with the opinion that it is necessary to focus on implementing existing instruments before any further integration can take place. While this position is logical considering the declared interest in joining the euro area, the Five President's Report went beyond the Czech position and presented a longer-term vision for the Economic and Monetary Union. There was also no significant internal discussion of the Czech contribution.

No progress was made in negotiations on the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union, or so-called Fiscal Pact, which the government committed to adopt. The document is still in the Chamber of Deputies and the government has not been able to find enough legislators in its support.

A positive step was the preparation of an impact study for Czech participation in the banking union, which the government discussed in February 2015. The analysis was prepared by the Ministry of Finance in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Office of the Government, and the Czech National Bank. This balanced group of analysts made it possible to not only consider aspects of banking supervision, but also a broader strategic perspective. The recommendation to not join the banking union for the time being is to be re-examined at regular intervals, thus institutionalizing a dialogue on this matter.

The European Union's Solution to the Refugee Crisis

Activity	C
Determination	D
Impact	C-
Normative aspect	C-
Final mark	C-

Strong Czech arguments doubting the functionality and legality of the relocation mechanism proposed by the European Commission received a lukewarm reception and the Czech Republic lost the subsequent vote. Czech opposition to this manner of handling the consequences of the refugee crisis then spilled over into general criticism of European integration, with government officials joining in. This approach was not balanced by the activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which should have taken care to ensure that there was no stagnation of bilateral relations, or a growing rift between Western and Central-Eastern Europe in resolving the refugee crisis. At the end of the year, the Czech Republic projected a more active policy and the Prime Minister began to assume a more forceful role in communicating the Czech position.

In addressing the refugee crisis at European level, the Czech debate was first dominated by the issue of quotas for relocating refugees and then the topic of protecting the Schengen Area.

The government argued against the relocation mechanism by casting doubt on how well it would work and its international legality. Yet no matter how relevant these arguments may have been, the Czech Republic did not win the debate and was outvoted at Justice and Home Affairs Council. The Czech Republic did not subsequently join the Slovak action against the introduction of the relocation mechanism. Although this step was criticized by Deputy Prime Minister Babiš during the course of the year, the government did not change its position.

Public debate was mostly influenced by the Ministry of the Interior, which viewed refugees as primarily a security threat. On the other hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out the foreign policy and humanitarian aspect, but was not very visible, which did not change even after the appointment of a Plenipotentiary for Migration at the MFA. Only in the later months of 2015 did the Prime Minister finally enter the discussion, when he refused to make the debate on migration solely about security and praised Czech volunteers helping refugees on the Balkan Route. On the other hand, President Zeman used the refugee crisis to spread hatred against Muslims and on November 17, supported right-wing extremists and xenophobic organizations by attending their demonstration.

Emphasis on protecting the Schengen Area and its borders was reflected in government support for the proposed creation of a European border and coast guard. Before the December meeting of the European Council, Prime Minister Sobotka presented another initiative, which in a letter to his counterparts emphasized the importance of the Schengen Area and pointed out steps necessary to maintain it.

Visegrad Cooperation

<i>Grade</i>			
B+	A	C+	C+
2012	2013	2014	year 2015

Visegrad Cooperation

Activity	B
Determination	B-
Impact	C
Normative aspect	C-
Final mark	C+

The Czech Presidency in the Visegrad Group came at a relatively unfavorable time. Neither the alternation of governments following Polish parliamentary elections nor the tense atmosphere before the Slovak elections helped to find common constructive positions at European level. Despite Czech efforts to mediate these positions, the V₄ did not escape being branded an uncooperative entity lacking solidarity with the EU. CZ V₄ PRES primarily concentrated on intra-Visegrad cohesion, which was reflected almost exclusively in the perception of the V₄ as a defensive and negative group due to the refugee crisis.

A priority of Czech foreign policy within Central European cooperation was the preparation, and from July 1, realization of the Czech Presidency in the Visegrad Group (CZ V₄ PRES).

The Czech Presidency came with well-targeted priorities and a realistic program. Instead of further robust expansion of agendas and the development of new V₄+ formats as had been the case during all previous presidencies, the Czech Republic decided to concentrate on areas where cooperation already existed. Emphasis on intra-Visegrad cohesion can be seen as a positive step and a necessary one following the turbulence of 2014.

However, all Visegrad Group agendas during the course of the year took a backseat to finding a common position on the refugee crisis. As major emphasis was placed on rejecting the EU relocation mechanism, the V₄ came to be viewed as a group lacking EU solidarity. Despite the efforts of the Czech Republic and especially Minister of Foreign Affairs Zaorálek to calibrate this view, a negative image of the V₄ could not be avoided.

Differing positions among V₄ countries also emerged in relation to energy. Disparate interests were evident during negotiations on the Energy Union in the first half of the year, where a strong Visegrad position lacked the approval

of Hungary, and when seeking a common position on the Nordstream II project, contradictory signals came from the Czech Republic.

Visegrad Cooperation on Security and Defense Policy

Activity	B+
Determination	B-
Impact	C-
Normative aspect	C-
Final mark	C+

The development of Visegrad cooperation has repeatedly brought only limited practical results, which V₄ countries are then hard pressed to further develop qualitatively. It appears that defense cooperation in particular moves at its own pace, characterized by repeated attempts to revive previously unsuccessful projects on the one hand, and limited real progress in those areas of long-term priorities with the greatest added value on the other. Unfulfilled potential of the last year can primarily be seen in the failure to reach an agreement on the creation of a permanent Visegrad brigade.

Cooperation of the Visegrad Group on security and defense policy continued in 2015. In addition to preparing the Visegrad EU Battle Group (V₄ EU BG), the V₄ under the Czech Presidency responded to the refugee crisis and attempted to revive some older cooperation projects.

Traditional cooperation among V₄ countries in the area of security acquired a new dimension in response to the refugee crisis. V₄ countries assisted Hungary and Slovenia in protecting the borders of the Schengen Area.

Defense cooperation in 2015 was characterized by final preparations for the V₄ EU BG, which commenced operation on January 1, 2016. Unfortunately, despite strong political support, no progress was made in the planned creation of a permanent Visegrad brigade beyond the framework of V₄ EU BG. The only practical success was completion of work on the V₄ Joint Training Strategy, which establishes annual joint training exercises of Visegrad armies. Lastly, a plan was also approved to create another V₄ EU BG for 2019.

In the past year, there was also an effort to revive the ambitious joint air space defense project, this time with the involvement of the USA. On a Czech

initiative, V₄ cooperation also began on the review of the EU defense package, which can be perceived as a positive step.

In other areas of defense cooperation such as armaments, whether in the form of joint military acquisitions or cooperation among the arms industries of V₄ countries, no significant progress was made despite previous declarations.

Key Bilateral Relations

GERMANY

Grade

B

B

A

B

2012

2013

2014

year 2015

USA

Grade

B

B

C+

C

2012

2013

2014

year 2015

POLAND

Grade

B-

B

C

B-

2012

2013

2014

year 2015

Germany

Activity	A-
Determination	A-
Impact	B
Normative aspect	C-
Final mark	B

Further progress in deepening Czech-German relations was achieved through the signing of the Czech-German strategic dialogue. Both the preparation and first months of the initiative indicate that this format may reach its potential. Positive advances were also made in the further development of relations with Saxony and Bavaria. With respect to the refugee crisis however, Germany was once again portrayed as a problematic player in Czech public debate. Czech politicians – especially Andrej Babiš and Milan Chovanec – focused their criticism on the person of the German Chancellor. Public support for the Bavarian position resulted in needlessly drawing the Czech Republic into the internal German debate. Likewise, there was growing criticism in Germany of Central and East European countries including the Czech Republic, as non-cooperative and lacking in solidarity.

The importance of Germany as the Czech Republic's most important foreign policy partner was reaffirmed in 2015. However, the depth and intensity of relations was reflected in both a positive and negative light last year.

The commendable intensity of political contacts in Czech-German relations continued, particularly at the level of Prime Ministers and Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The exception here were the Presidents as there was no meeting of Joachim Gauck and Miloš Zeman in 2015.

Czech-German strategic dialogue commenced in July. This step can be viewed as an appropriate response to the high level of political, economic and civic cooperation, and as further formal progress in mutual relations. The agreement on strategic dialogue advances the basic framework of mutual relations beyond the Czech-German Declaration of 1997 and enables deeper relations and easier coordination. Both the preparation of strategic dialogue and the brief time it has functioned to date can be rated positively. In contrast to previous expectations, there was considerable interest from individual ministries to get involved in this format, which led to an increase in the number of working groups. Dialogue also proved to be a suitable format for debate on currently challenging issues,

as shown by the creation of the working group on migration and integration at the end of the year.

Further advances were also made in relations with neighboring German federal states - Bavaria and Saxony. In relations with Bavaria, it appears we have finally been able to move past historic questions and focus cooperation on current or future-oriented issues. Contacts continued to be developed, especially in the areas of transportation, science and research. Bavaria also gained respect in the eyes of numerous Czech politicians for its criticism of Angela Merkel and her view on handling the refugee crisis. This rhetoric however was very insensitive, as in doing so the Czech Republic implicitly sided with critics of the Chancellor's policy. This format of developing relations with Bavaria is certainly not desirable for the Czech Republic, as it concurrently worsens trust in mutual relations with Berlin.

Cooperation with Saxony continued to focus on fighting drugs and cross-border criminality, but so far with little result. Another constant topic is the effort to improve cooperation in the area of transportation.

The 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War provided an opportunity to commemorate the victims of the war and post-war period. Partial progress was again made in relations with the descendants of Germans expelled from the Czech Republic when Deputy Prime Minister Bělobrádek paid tribute to the memory of the victims of expulsion. Czech participation in the Sudeten German Day was also dignified, and was attended by the Czech Consul General in Munich for the first time. The Sudeten German Landsmannschaft also decided to strike the demand for the return of property from its statute. However, Czech initiatives took place without sending a significant signal to Czech society. The Prime Minister's response to Pavel Bělobrádek's gesture was more or less evasive. However, there were some interesting initiatives at local level, especially Brno's Year of Reconciliation.

Poland

Activity	B
Determination	B-
Impact	B
Normative aspect	C
Final mark	B-

Although bilateral relations are on a good footing, the distance between the two countries in strategic matters relating to security breaches of order in Europe in 2014 were not compensated by any increase in activity in 2015. In its new foreign policy concept, the Czech Republic has reaffirmed its interest in developing a strategic dialogue with Poland. Progress was made in several areas of sectoral cooperation, although some issues such as the land debt remain unresolved.

Czech-Polish relations experienced a period of further stagnation in 2015. There was a lack of interest in developing strategic projects on the Czech side and because of Parliamentary elections in Poland, it was not possible to fully develop cooperation on a working level in the second half of the year.

The main event in Czech-Polish relations was inter-governmental consultation that took place in April, where a number of joint projects were discussed. With respect to infrastructure cooperation, it was agreed to begin preparations for a second motorway connecting Hradec Králové and Wrocław. Support for the construction of the Stork II gas pipeline was also confirmed and a memorandum was signed to connect the Czech and Polish gas distribution networks. Further coordination of activities to improve the air quality in Silesia was agreed and lastly, the Ministers of Agriculture countenanced deepening cooperation between food safety inspection authorities.

2015 did not bring any progress in resolving the "land debt", where the Czech Republic owes its neighbor a small amount of land following the redrawing of the border in the nineteen fifties. Negotiations were complicated by linking this matter to the issue of "Warsaw properties" in which the Czech Republic requires the return of land confiscated by the Polish government after WWII. However, the Czech Republic has still not found and presented a full list of land that is to be the subject of this territorial settlement.

While 2015 did not see any major meltdowns in strategic issues, especially security and Eastern policy compared to the previous year, disagreements tended to be swept under the carpet rather than resolved. The Czech President did not support the joint Polish-Romanian initiative of the Eastern wing of NATO with his participation and the Czech Republic reiterated that it was in a different position than Poland.

The establishment of the new Polish government was followed by a wave of foreign criticism due to the rapid changes in public institutions. The Czech Republic did not join this criticism, which should be perceived as a positive step.

United States of America

Activity	C
Determination	C
Impact	C-
Normative aspect	B-
Final mark	C

Relations between the Czech Republic and the United States were particularly damaged in 2015 by the contradictory positions taken by the government and the President, and the increasingly vague foreign policy orientation of the Czech Republic. Due to a lack of new areas for mutual relations, there was a certain exhaustion of bilateral cooperation, although many projects continue to operate successfully.

Bilateral relations between the Czech Republic and the United States continue along the trajectory set in recent years, with a growing divide between the foreign policy actions of the government and the President. With a few minor exceptions, the activity of the government can be considered constructive. Certain steps by President Zeman, however, raised doubts in the United States about the foreign policy orientation of the Czech Republic, which can be considered a serious problem for the future. There was a gradual exhaustion of bilateral relations, as old matters were concluded or continued without change, and no new areas of cooperation were established.

In 2015, Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka travelled to the United States to take part in the security summit of coalition partners in the fight against ISIL. Increased interaction between the representatives of both countries will undoubtedly benefit Czech-American relations. On the other hand, the government has not overly distanced itself from the actions of the President, which does little to dispel US concerns regarding the long-term direction of Czech foreign policy.

President Miloš Zeman also travelled to the USA. During his March visit, no senior American politicians met with the Czech President. On the other hand, Zeman's meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, who has been involved in a long-running dispute with President Obama, could be perceived as a not very diplomatic step on American soil. A negative light was also cast on the Czech Republic by Zeman's attendance of the Moscow military parade to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, which was boycotted

by most leaders of democratic countries, and the President's related statement that the doors of Prague Castle were closed to American Ambassador Shapiro.

As in previous years, bilateral cooperation primarily concerned areas of common values and human rights, which were identified as a priority in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Czech Republic. The successful operation of joint projects begun in previous years continued. These include the Václav Havel scholarship program focusing on assisting Ukrainian students or the Open Government Partnership, which is part of the American government's broader activity aimed at fighting corruption in Central and Eastern Europe.

Eastern Europe and the Balkans

Grade

B+

2012

C+

2013

D

2014

B-

year 2015

Russia

Activity	C-
Determination	B-
Impact	B-
Normative aspect	C-
Final mark	C

The Czech Republic maintained a consistent position in its relations with Russia, based on the European consensus. No differing views on sanctions were thus publicly voiced as in 2014. The basis for improving Czech-Russian relations is compliance with the Minsk Agreements, Russia's withdrawal from Crimea and as a result, the possible betterment of relations between Russia and the West. Last year, the Czech government also sought an answer to increasing Russian propaganda and intelligence activity, where one of the measures taken was to increase the budget for intelligence services. The credibility of the Czech Republic, however, was brought into question by the actions of the President, who when meeting with his counterpart Putin called for an end to sanctions and supported pro-Kremlin activists in the Czech Republic. The Czech President was once again the most vocal advocate of the Kremlin among European statesmen in 2015.

Russian intervention in the internal affairs of Ukraine continued in 2015 and relations between the West and Russia further worsened as a result of Russian engagement in Syria and the increasingly intensive Russian propaganda campaign in the EU.

The Czech Republic backed the Minsk Agreements. In light of Russia's non-compliance and the continuing annexation of Crimea, the government supported the extension of EU sanctions against Russia and consistently maintained this position throughout the year.

Newly approved policy documents also treat Russia in this manner. The Security Strategy indirectly warns against Russian activity. The Czech Foreign Policy Concept emphasizes the importance of Russia in addressing a number of internationally significant issues, but also notes that the nature of relations between Prague and Moscow will depend on upholding international law and the territorial sovereignty of Russia's neighbors.

A partial success for the Czech Republic was the appointment of Czech journalist Jakub Kalenský to the East Stratcom Task Force – a group of the

European External Action Service fighting the Russian disinformation and propaganda campaign.

President Miloš Zeman's position remained an anomaly. He was the only head of state of an EU country to attend the Victory Day celebrations. He met with Vladimir Putin in September in China, while repeatedly calling for the European Union to lift its sanctions against Russia. The President was also present at a rally in Albertov on November 17, where he publicly appeared not only alongside representatives of various xenophobic groups, but also openly pro-Kremlin activists.

Ukraine

Activity	B-
Determination	B
Impact	B-
Normative aspect	C
Final mark	B-

The main problem in relations with Ukraine is the passivity and disinterest of the Czech political scene, evident above all in the protracted ratification of the Association Agreement, the absence of visits at the highest level, and the destructive stances of President Zeman. Yet the position of the Czech Government did not deviate from the European consensus in any way and the Czech Republic was active in carrying out humanitarian and transformation activities in Ukraine.

After the escalation of the war in Donbass at the beginning of the year, the situation in Ukraine calmed down following the signing of the Minsk Agreements. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict, however, is far from resolved. With respect to security policy and economic diplomacy, Ukraine should continue to be an important topic of Czech foreign policy.

Unfortunately, Czech politics remained unable to shake free of its passivity and divisiveness at the highest political level last year. Because of his warm relationship with Vladimir Putin and repeated calls to end the sanctions against Russia, the President has had a detrimental effect on Czech-Ukrainian relations and has damaged the Czech Republic's reputation in Ukraine. During the course of the year, not a single mutual visit took place at the highest political level, starkly contrasting to the declared importance of Ukraine for Czech foreign policy and

its position as a priority country according to the declared pro-export strategy. The only visit to Ukraine was paid by Minister of Foreign Affairs Zaorálek, while his counterpart Pavlo Klimkin reciprocally came to Prague.

A particularly significant problem was the slow ratification of the Association Agreement with Ukraine in the Chamber of Deputies. The agreement was not approved during Klimkin's visit to Prague and did not pass through Parliament until September 2015. The Czech Republic was thus one of the last EU countries to ratify the Association Agreement. In addition, the Czech Republic has no strategy with respect to Ukraine and has nearly halted any bilateral agenda.

Unfortunately, these problems overshadow the other activities of the Czech government and the fact that the Czech position does not diverge from the consensus on a European level. Successfully realized projects in 2015 included, for example, continuing activity within the government's MEDEVAC program, which followed on Czech assistance in 2014. In addition to this, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working with the non-governmental sector to play a major role in other humanitarian projects that have delivered a large amount of medical supplies to Ukraine, as well as several ambulances. Transformation assistance to Ukraine is also continuing. An important element of Czech policy towards Ukraine is support for the local non-governmental sector through the Czech embassy in Kyiv, which received nearly five million crowns in 2015, or support for higher education consisting of, among other things, material assistance to universities in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Eastern Partnership

Activity	B
Determination	B
Impact	C
Normative aspect	B-
Final mark	B

The Czech Republic confirmed its interest in the Eastern Partnership policy in 2015 and took part in shaping this policy. In this respect, Czech involvement in drafting the final declaration at the Riga summit and support of the proposal for deepening the Eastern Partnership presented at the December Council for Foreign Relations can be rated positively. These initiatives correspond to Czech objectives to better adapt available tools to the needs of individual countries, which can currently be understood as an appropriate step forward. Czech credibility and the country's good reputation in Eastern Europe, however, continue to be damaged by the actions of the President, both with respect to Russian aggression in Ukraine and to the Eastern Partnership as such when, for example, he proposed including Russia within this framework in Riga.

2015 was characterized by a high degree of interest in the Eastern Partnership initiative in Czech foreign policy, especially in connection with the Riga summit and Review of the European Neighborhood Policy.

The Eastern Partnership was mentioned in the new foreign policy concept. In the document, the Czech Republic committed itself to supporting and developing this policy.

The key event was the Eastern Partnership summit, which was held on May 21 and 22 in Riga. The main conclusion, also supported by the Czech delegation, was that the European Union should try to better focus on the specific needs of individual partner countries. The Czech Republic also agreed to visa liberalization for Georgia and Ukraine, which should take place in the near future. However, the Czech Republic was not the driving force in this process.

In December, the Czech Republic joined the Swedish-Polish proposal to strengthen and further develop Eastern Partnership policy. The proposal lays out priority areas on which the EU should focus in the future, such as internal stability and increasing the resilience of partner countries, offering further prospects for deepening relations for associated countries, promoting mobility by easing visa requirements or supporting interpersonal contacts and civic society.

The Czech Republic also supported limiting sanctions against Belarus and EU efforts to restart a mutual dialogue with this country. These steps relate to an attempt to differentiate the approach to individual partner countries and achieve the maximum possible.

Western Balkans

Activity	B
Determination	C
Impact	B
Normative aspect	B
Final mark	B

In the context of the refugee crisis and the significance of the Balkan migration route, the policy of the EU and Czech Republic in relation to the Western Balkans has become considerably more active. There has been more frequent mention of support for integration into Euro-Atlantic structures and promises of specific assistance. A tangible result of Czech policy in relation to the region is the commencement of activity of the Western Balkans Fund.

Last year was a turning point for Czech policy in relation to the Western Balkans. After a decline in attention focused on the region by EU institutions and the Czech Republic in 2014, the Western Balkans became a priority from the beginning of 2015. The event that triggered renewed interest was the refugee crisis and the considerable increase in the number of migrants entering European Union countries along the Balkan Route (typically Greece-Macedonia-Serbia-Croatia). The change in policy reflects the key interest of the EU in the stability of the Western Balkan states and their ability to control the migrants passing through these countries.

In early September, Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka traveled to Serbia. He met with his counterpart Aleksandr Vučić to discuss mutual investments and promised CZK 10 million of assistance to manage the refugee crisis. In Prague, the Czech Prime Minister met with the Prime Ministers of Montenegro and Albania. Then in October, Minister of Foreign Affairs Lubomír Zaorálek visited Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. During these meetings, Czech representatives expressed more vocal support for the Euro-Atlantic integration of all countries in the region than in the past. At the October summit on the refugee crisis, Zaorálek reiterated the need for the involvement of all these countries in seeking a solution and promised them financial, material and human resources assistance.

In November 2015, during the Czech V4 Presidency, the foreign ministers of six Western Balkan countries came to Prague to launch the Western Balkans Fund, whose creation was initiated by the Czech Republic during its last presidency of the group. The Fund will be based in Tirana, Albania. Funding received to date, however, is only in the order of a few million CZK.

Middle East and North Africa

Grade

C

2012

C-

2013

C

2014

C+

year 2015

Wars In Syria and Iraq

Activity	B-
Determination	B-
Impact	C-
Normative aspect	C-
Final mark	C

The support of local groups fighting against ISIL is a positive step in line with both the declared strategy of resolving conflicts at their source, as well as allied interests, and it is also commensurate to Czech capacities. Similarly, humanitarian assistance and its increase must be appreciated. Conversely, a problematic aspect is the unconventional maintenance of friendly relations with the Syrian regime that goes far beyond allied obligations, or the role of the Czech embassy as a link between Damascus and the West. However, it is the domestic dimension of these conflicts that deserves strong criticism. In a situation where the countries of the region are on the brink of exhausting their capacities, an extremely low number of people are being accepted by the Czech Republic. Moreover, refugees are systematically demonized in the Czech Republic and denied basic human rights, a situation for which the Czech political elite share some blame. In general, the response to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq lacks coherence and its individual aspects often follow different logic.

In the past year, Czech foreign policy in the Middle East and North Africa has been primarily confronted with the wars in Syria and Iraq and their repercussions in Europe in the form of the refugee crisis and the threat of terrorist attacks by ISIL. The main objective, supported across the political spectrum, was an effort to solve these problems at their source, i.e. in Syria, Iraq and surrounding countries. This resulted in several initiatives. The Czech Republic continued to take active part in the coalition against ISIL led by the United States. In particular, the Czech Republic provided assistance in building local capacities. Further, the Czech Republic emphasized the need to find a political solution to these conflicts and provided humanitarian assistance.

The Czech Republic supported regional participants in the fight against ISIL by supplying military equipment and training local forces. In November, the Kurdish regional government received a gift of ammunition and grenades and Iraq received the first shipment of more than one hundred pieces of military equipment. This trend is to continue. For example, the Czech Republic signed an important contract for the delivery of fifteen L-159 fighter jets to Iraq. In addition,

the Czech Republic is training Iraqi helicopter pilots and is considering training medical personnel and police officers.

Within the European Union, Czech diplomacy stressed the need to find a political solution to the war in Syria, which should be based on negotiations between the Assad regime and the opposition according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Here the Czech position is difficult to read. On the one hand, according to Minister of Foreign Affairs Zaorálek, President Assad cannot represent the future of Syria. On the other, practical matters such as negotiations on economic relations with Damascus by Deputy Tlapa seem to indicate a different direction of Czech policy, and tend to reinforce the legitimacy of the established regime.

Humanitarian assistance also went to war-torn countries last year. The Czech Republic provided funds for food and medical assistance and the education of refugees in Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. Prime Minister Sobotka promised a further increase in funds for this year. Nevertheless, assistance to devastated Middle Eastern countries is accompanied by a lack of willingness to accept refugees directly in the Czech Republic, or to treat them in accordance with international agreements in our territory. For example, the way these people have been held in Czech detention centers is problematic from a human rights and moral perspective, also evident from UN criticism. However, certain isolated acts should be appreciated, such as the granting of university scholarships and medical treatment of Syrian children, or the acceptance of a few dozen Iraqi Christians.

Relations with Other Important Countries in the Middle East

Activity	B
Determination	B
Impact	B-
Normative aspect	C
Final mark	B

The deft utilization of the opening political, and in turn, economic space in Iran to establish new trade partnerships deserves praise, although it is too early to tell to what degree these activities will be truly successful. On the other hand, we find the export of military equipment to undemocratic countries to be highly problematic, especially in areas where the weapons are used to undermine the Czech Republic's previous transformation activity.

Two other important trends could be seen in Czech foreign policy in the region last year: on the one hand, the sale of weapons to undemocratic regimes continued, and there was a positive expansion of diplomatic and economic cooperation with Iran on the other.

The 2014 report on the export of arms and military equipment shows continuing exports of a sizable volume of arms to Egypt and a multifold increase in the value of shipments to Saudi Arabia. In both cases, these are countries which systematically suppress human rights. The government of former General Sísí in Egypt put a definite stop to efforts at democratization, supported among other things by Ministry of Foreign Affairs transformation projects, and is responsible for the strong repression of its opponents, including political murders, while Saudi Arabia has long been among the least democratic countries in the world.

On a more positive note was the establishment of trade relations with Tehran. The Czech delegation actively took advantage of the opportunity for economic cooperation following the agreement on Iran's nuclear program last July. In addition to several visits to Iran with representatives of Czech companies, it was decided to open a new CzechTrade branch office in Iran and the planned launch of the "Gateway to Persia" program to help companies get established on the local market in March 2016.

Asia

<i>Grade</i>			
B	B-	B	B+
2012	2013	2014	year 2015

China

Activity	B
Determination	B
Impact	B
Normative aspect	C
Final mark	B

The Czech Republic is slowly stabilizing its relations with China and shifting from a general political framework to specific cooperation projects. Intensive initial interaction may be quickly followed by a sobering period. However, the Czech Republic has not yet clearly defined the priorities it wants to achieve in its relations with China (e.g. greater success of small and medium Czech businesses on the Chinese market), and it has not brought its policy towards China into line with other aspects of foreign policy (e.g. human rights agenda).

As in the previous year, Czech foreign policy towards China was very active, although the media image often exceeded real outcomes. While in 2014, the set course evoked great passion, 2015 ushered in a phase of greater stabilization and the first joint projects. Prime Minister Sobotka visited Beijing for the meeting of the regional 16+1 platform, where he met with President Xi Jinping and also signed a memorandum on involvement in the New Silk Road project. Unlike Poland or Austria, the Czech Republic has yet to join the new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. A new Czech consulate was opened in the Western Chinese City of Chengdu. A new direct flight from Beijing to Prague began operation at low prices to draw Chinese tourists to the Czech Republic. Cooperation is also taking place in the areas of science and technology, and TAČR (Technology Agency of the Czech Republic) has announced the first joint program for cooperation between Czech and Chinese companies.

The first promised investments were made, in particular by the CEFC, which purchased several lucrative properties, acquired a nearly 10% share in the Czech-Slovak J&T Group, a 60% share of the Slavia Prague football club and a nearly 50% share in the Travel Service airline. It must be emphasized however that unlike other Asian investments, these Czech-Chinese projects created almost no new jobs. Even the promised Chinese banking centers for Central and Eastern Europe

will be no exception. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that social expectations will far exceed the real economic potential of cooperation.

The intensity of mutual relations is now also reflected in the interest of Czech exporters and investors in the Chinese market, although it will also be necessary to wait for new major successes here. Aside from established brands such as Škoda Auto or Home Credit, other companies have been conducting long-term negotiations with their Chinese counterparts in areas such as aviation, environmental technologies, health care or the food industry. Although political relations are often not critical for the success of companies on the Chinese market, they may help, especially in these segments.

Despite growing cooperation in many areas, any dialogue on human rights has so far been stagnant. Minister Zaorálek mentioned that the Czech Republic intends to focus on social and environmental rights several times, which are certainly more acceptable topics for China than first generation political rights. However, we have yet to see specific projects or at least a general vision.

Although the Czech Republic devotes great attention to relations with China, it also continues to further develop joint projects with Taiwan. TAČR's call for grant applications for joint research and development projects, which was open to both Chinese and Taiwanese companies, may be considered a successful strategic step. The work holidays project is getting underway in Taiwan and a trade delegation from the Ministry of Industry and Trade has helped initiate cooperation focusing particularly on innovative areas of biotechnology, nanotechnology, alternative energy resources and ICT.

South Korea

Activity	A
Determination	A
Impact	A-
Normative aspect	A
Final mark	A

Last year's visit by the South Korean President symbolically culminated a quarter of a century of cooperation and relations with the Republic of Korea, which is an example of successful Czech foreign policy. For this cooperation to continue to develop in a balanced manner, the Czech Republic should consistently promote reciprocity and at the same time take advantage of the favorable situation to promote its long-term strategic interests.

The Czech Republic and South Korea celebrated 25 years of diplomatic relations with a number of major events that raised the dynamically growing bilateral cooperation of recent years to the level of a declared strategic partnership.

In addition to the Agreement on Strategic Partnership, the development of relations was also encouraged by the Memorandum of Understanding between the respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the new Czech-Korean Forum for the Future. The exceptional nature of relations was underscored at the end of the year when President Miloš Zeman welcomed the South Korean head of state to Prague Castle for the first time in two decades. President Park Geun-hye also attended the Visegrad Group summit, again highlighting the strategic emphasis of current South Korean foreign policy and the related potential of the Czech Republic to open the door to Europe.

A priority area of cooperation for the Koreans is undoubtedly nuclear energy, whether this be the completion of the Temelín nuclear power plant, the expansion of the Dukovany plant, or joint projects in third countries. This also relates to other areas such as the construction of modern transportation systems or defense. Economic diplomacy was also very active, on both sides. The Memorandum of Understanding between the Czech company Gold of Prague and the South Korean Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs sealed the first Czech investment in the Republic of Korea – the construction of a Czech brewery. Korean investment in the Czech Republic in the order of tens of billions of crowns from the previous year was not repeated, however by opening a branch in Seoul, CzechInvest created the conditions for longer term interest in cooperation, especially at small and medium business level.

Human Rights and Transformation Cooperation

Grade

C+

2012

C

2013

C

2014

B-

year 2015

Human Rights and Transformation Cooperation

Activity	B-
Determination	B
Impact	B
Normative aspect	C-
Final mark	B-

There was no radical transformation of policy for promoting human rights in the world. According to the new policy documents, the human rights agenda continues to be an integral part of Czech foreign policy. The list of priority areas was expanded to include cultural, social and economic rights, but without an adequate increase in funding for Czech involvement in these areas. The main problem of Czech support for human rights, however, remains the incoherence of its implementation. The activity of President Zeman in particular shows complete ignorance of the issue on his part. In addition, these actions were not adequately offset by governmental efforts.

In 2015, the tense public debate over the role of human rights in foreign policy moderated. Discussion moved from the media space to an expert level, especially in relation to the preparation of the new foreign policy concept and review of the Concept for Promotion of Human Rights and Transformation Cooperation.

There were no significant changes in Czech human rights policy. The foreign policy concept emphasized the universality of human rights and their incorporation into all aspects of foreign policy. There was also mention of promoting human rights in conditions of mutual dialogue and respect, while pointing out that support must not be abandoned even under less favorable conditions. Such formulation, however, indicates a gradual neutralization of the original intent and remains unclear. Support for human rights advocates was also confirmed.

According to new policy materials, a greater emphasis is to be placed on social, economic and cultural rights, which are seen as inseparable from political and civil rights. This expansion of priority areas has not yet been reflected in any increase in Ministry of Foreign Affairs funding dedicated to human rights and transformation cooperation.

On a practical level, the reputation of the Czech Republic as a country advocating the promotion of human rights was once again compromised by the actions of its senior representatives. A problematic aspect in this regard was particularly the trip by President Zeman to Azerbaijan, where a strategic partnership approved by the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs was signed. Such relations with one of the most repressive countries in terms of human rights, where the state of civil liberties continues to deteriorate, is unacceptable and not in line with the foreign policy concept.

Security and Defense Policy

Grade

C+

2012

B+

2013

C+

2014

C+

year 2015

Czech NATO Policy

Activity	C
Determination	C
Impact	C
Normative aspect	D
Final mark	C

The ruling coalition has yet to find an effective mechanism for negotiating fundamental issues related to Czech NATO policy in a manner that eliminates counterproductive and at times populist statements or subsequent media exchanges. It has therefore not been able to forge practical Czech contributions into a proactive position within the framework of discussion on the ongoing adaptation of NATO to the changing security environment of Eastern and Southern Europe.

Like the year before, Czech policy in NATO was characterized by a contrast between practical steps in the form of valuable contributions to alliance activities and verbal statements by senior politicians, made without consultation at governmental level. The warm welcome of a convoy of American soldiers travelling through the Czech Republic in late March and early April was a symbolic demonstration of support for transatlantic ties.

At the request of NATO partners, Czech Gripen fighters embarked on their fourth foreign mission in July and August, where after one year they were again engaged in helping to defend Iceland air space. This was a visible contribution to the alliance. In response to the evolving concept of NATO's rapid response force, the Czech Republic doubled its originally planned contribution for 2016. Changes to the foreign mission mandate were approved in Parliament at the last minute in mid-December, only thanks to the votes of the right-wing opposition.

A critical appeal to NATO to protect the southern border of the Schengen Area with regard to the migration crisis was voiced by Deputy Prime Minister Andrej Babiš in August. Unexpectedly, this proposal also became a point of discussion during the Prague visit of the NATO Secretary General. The call to send NATO ships to sink empty vessels used by human traffickers and help secure Turkish borders was doubly off target – NATO did eventually get involved, but in a completely different way. The possible role of NATO in the migration crisis

was subsequently clarified by the coalition through mutual verbal salvos fired through the media.

October's Bucharest summit of NATO's east wing countries organized by the Romanian and Polish Presidents showed that the Czech Republic still does not feel threatened from the East, but at the same time will not object to an increase of NATO's presence in the region. Sending the Chair of the Chamber of Deputies to a meeting of eight presidents gave a clear signal to regional partners of the low importance of this matter from the perspective of Czech politicians.

The government weakened the existing image of the Czech Republic as a new member traditionally and enthusiastically supporting the NATO policy of enlargement. This was most evident in July's state visit by the Georgian Minister of Defense. Her Czech counterpart Stropnický neglected to mention the position of the Czech Republic regarding the Membership Action Plan, for which Georgia has been waiting in vain since 2008. However, what he untactfully did not omit to mention was the need to take the opinion of Russia into account regarding the potential accession of Georgia to NATO.

Foreign Exercise by the Czech Army in Response to the Refugee Crisis

Activity	B
Determination	B-
Impact	B
Normative aspect	D
Final mark	B-

With regard to the migration crisis and the unpredictability of the situation it is understandable why Parliament made no objection to being bypassed by the Ministry of Defense. In the future however, the deployment of Czech Army troops on missions whose practical content corresponds to foreign military exercises and that can be approved by the government alone, should be subject to thorough parliamentary control so that this exception does not become standard procedure.

In 2015, there was a gradual increase in pressure on countries along the Balkan Route, along which a great many refugees made their way to Europe. The Czech Republic therefore decided to provide police and soldiers to Hungary

and Slovenia. The Ministry of Defense and Ministry of the Interior had the government approve this mission.

The Ministry of Defense called the deployment of soldiers to Hungary and Slovenia a foreign exercise, which does not require the approval of Czech Parliament, as is the case for traditional foreign missions by the Czech Army. The logistical support of the Hungarian army for its operational deployment protecting the Hungarian border and medical support on the Slovenian border, however, were characteristic of a non-combat foreign mission. Such deployment should, and under normal circumstances would always be subject to parliamentary approval.

It would therefore be logical for this matter to be taken up by the Parliamentary Constitutional and Defense Committee and conceptually and constitutionally addressed by a floating mandate. By this mandate, Parliament does not approve a specific mission, but determines the amount of contributions made to the NATO rapid response force and EU battle groups. This contribution is only limited by the upper ceiling of the number of allocated soldiers, and regionally in the case of the Middle East, North Africa and Sahel.

Economic Diplomacy

<i>Grade</i>			
C-	B+	B	C+
2012	2013	2014	year 2015

Economic Diplomacy and Foreign Policy Priorities

Activity	B
Determination	D
Impact	D
Normative aspect	D
Final mark	C-

Support of economic interests should be achieved through friendly and well-led diplomacy, while of course respecting other priorities of Czech foreign policy. The promotion of economic goals should not serve as a tool in internal political conflicts or as the subject of media attention. In this regard, the President of the Czech Republic is very inconsistent and his deeds tend to damage Czech interests. For the time being, the government does not have the courage to effectively counter the head of state, which allows the problem to grow over time.

In 2015, Czech foreign policy continued with its declared emphasis on economic diplomacy. While at bureaucratic level, this component functioned very well, on a political level there were once again conflicting priorities with other interests of the Czech Republic. A major role was played here by President Zeman, who often proclaimed that trade is the primary purpose of diplomacy, but then undermined trade relations with many of his statements. Moreover, his politics and interests often conflicted with the line espoused by the government (e.g. towards Russia or the Middle East).

Zeman's repeated offensive statements about Islamic countries in general and Turkey in particular have had a very negative effect on mutual relations and can also affect trade (although this does not appear to be happening at the moment). At any rate, such remarks contradict Zeman's theory that open diplomacy should facilitate economic cooperation. The head of state himself is very selective about whom he is willing to accommodate.

A symptomatic case in point is Saudi Arabia, where the President's statements have threatened to disrupt trade relations. From the perspective of Czech exporters, the country is considered a very promising market (as evidenced by the recent mission of an agricultural diplomat). In addition, the country plays a key role in resolving the crisis in the Middle East, although from a human rights perspective it is in many respects worse than other countries criticized by even Czech diplomacy. Offensive quips instead of well-considered and coordinated

foreign policy activities that take this complexity into account, cannot help Czech exporters, or Czech foreign policy as a whole.

Another example of a problematic approach are certain aspects of relations with China. Closer economic ties are certainly welcome and undoubtedly there is still considerable potential for greater expansion by Czech companies. However, at present there is very little Chinese investment in the Czech Republic. It is therefore questionable why the President chooses his only official foreign advisor the President of the CEFC Group, which may be purchasing in the Czech Republic at the moment, but the volume of its investments (and their impact on job creation) is incomparably lower than that of Korean or Japanese companies. It is obvious that investors from these countries will not view this step in a positive light.

Performance of Economic Diplomacy

Activity	A-
Determination	B
Impact	B-
Normative aspect	B
Final mark	B

It is very positive that economic diplomacy is stable on a working level and its tools enable entrepreneurs to develop their activities in a transparent and clearly defined environment. One can only hope this trend continues and is reflected even more on a political level.

Unlike the previous year, there were not as many revolutionary changes in the operation of economic diplomacy. Instead, it was more a continuation of the set course. The joint contact center where entrepreneurs can address specific requirements from economic diplomats has been in operation for one year and the general impression has been fairly positive. State administration is becoming accustomed to coordinating various participants and applying a more business-like approach, and the business community is learning that the state offers a more or less clearly defined framework of services that it can use. One visible innovation is the creation of maps of territorial opportunities, which have now been expanded to focus on particular sectors.

A positive development is the effort to obtain more information from embassies and create priorities based on this information. If there is really a

focus on better coordination of development assistance and economic diplomacy this year, then it will be another step in the right direction since the potential of certain development projects for future economic relations is certainly not negligible. In the future, it will be a great challenge for economic diplomacy to integrate the Industry 4.0 initiative, which plans to respond to the complete transformation of industrial production through new technologies. Czech diplomacy will have to demonstrate that the country remains internationally competitive.

A separate matter is the purpose and use of foreign visits, either at presidential, ministerial or deputy level. Many participants claim that they often serve primarily for the business representatives on board to gain access to specific government officials. At the same time however, it is true that many countries that have recently been the focus of intensive Czech efforts have a liking for official ceremony and political support (China, Iran, and Kazakhstan). If any business agreements are signed during the trip, this can be used by Czech entrepreneurs to their benefit. In this regard, the idea of deputy visits that combine political support with very specific projects (e.g. in aviation, energy, etc.) is a positive trend.

Less positive is the failure to revise the Export Strategy of the Czech Republic, which is currently absolutely worthless and has no value for either the business community or the government. Since it is to remain in effect until 2020, we can only hope that it will be revised this year and incorporate other dimensions such as Industry 4.0 or sector opportunities.

Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance

Grade

C+

C+

2014

year 2015

Foreign Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance

Activity	B
Determination	C
Impact	C
Normative aspect	C
Final mark	C+

Czech FDC activity can be characterized as stable with persistent, long-term areas of weakness such as underfunding, sectoral and geographic fragmentation, and poor integration with other policies. A positive aspect is the relatively flexible provision of humanitarian assistance.

From a global perspective, 2015 was significant due to the adoption of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that create a new, broad conceptual framework for development cooperation over the next fifteen years. The Czech year, on the other hand, can be better characterized by inertia, although development cooperation was a topic mentioned by senior government officials, including Prime Minister Sobotka for the first time in a decade. Despite this, FDC remained magnanimous "assistance for the less fortunate", strategic "investment into future markets" and "support for Czech companies" in 2015, even though the new, inclusive concept of SDGs and support for public discussion of FDC as part of the European Year of Development presented a great opportunity to introduce more adequate rhetoric. In the context of the increasing flow of migrants to EU countries, FDC is now being discussed as a tool for addressing the cause of migration in the refugees' countries of origin, presented – incorrectly and buck-passingly – as an alternative to constructive engagement in resolving this problem in Europe.

In practice, Czech FDC continued along the lines set forth in the FDC Concept of 2010 and its mid-term assessment in 2014. Although as a member of the EU-12, the Czech Republic agreed to allocate 0.33% of GNP to FDC in 2015, it did not meet this commitment and, as before, funding remained at about one-third of this level. As in previous years, Czech FDC was spread over a large number of geographical and thematic areas, with the greatest focus on the Western Balkans and an emphasis on "hard" sectors (water supply and sanitation, agriculture and forestry, energy). It does not appear we can expect a new, narrower focus or an effort to address some of the systemic problems of Czech FDC such as

low effectiveness and insufficient integration of development goals with other elements of domestic and foreign policy until a new concept is drafted in 2017. A pre-cursor to this was the decision to increase the capacities of the Czech Development Agency last year.

A positive aspect of the past year was the provision of humanitarian assistance, which responded relatively flexibly to the increased incidence of crises in the world. The original budget, just as low as in previous years, was operatively increased during the course of the year and additional resources were freed up by the government and obtained from other sources. Extraordinary funding was primarily used for the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, the earthquake in Nepal and the conflict in Ukraine. At the end of the year, the Czech Republic was also relatively quick to release funding to increase food security in Ethiopia. The Czech Republic also contributed to multilateral programs directed to the Middle East.

Climate Policy

Grade

B+

year 2015

Climate Policy

Activity	A
Determination	C
Impact	A-
Normative aspect	B
Final mark	B+

The Czech Republic was able to balance between the position of more ambitious EU countries and newer Member States that are worried about the impact climate policy could have on their economies. At the same time, it should focus on the appropriate use of available funding to facilitate the implementation of this policy.

The key event with respect to climate policy was the 21st Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) held in December in Paris, which also became the focal point of the EU agenda. The European Union had already finalized its position for climate negotiations in September and during the conference was one of the main advocates for an ambitious global agreement.

The Czech Republic also had to respond. During preparation of the EU position, coordination within CZ V₄ PRES took place based on the proven V₄ framework + Bulgaria and Romania. The goal was to maintain European ambitions within the limits of the EU 2030 climate/energy package and prevent any increase before the signing of the global agreement, which was successful.

In Paris, the Czech Republic acted in line with the European consensus. However, it was one of the few newer EU Member States to sign the declaration of forty countries supporting the end of subsidies for fossil fuels. At least in declaratory terms, the Czech Republic supported important changes in the structure of energy policy on a global level.

At European level, climate policy was dominated by negotiations on stabilization reserves in the EU emissions trading system (EU ETS), the introduction of which is expected to increase the price of emissions allowances.

The Czech Republic was instrumental in bringing these negotiations to a close when at a late stage of the talks it left the minority group opposed to the quick introduction of reserves. The decision brought an indignant response from some traditional partners including Poland, and was not fully communicated even within Czech state administration. On the other hand, the Czech Republic

pushed through the preservation of benefits for newer Member States as called for by the EU2030 package within the EU ETS system.

Financial compensation for these countries is already included in EU ETS rules that will apply until 2020. Along with this, the Czech Republic also has funding from EU structural funds. As in previous years, there are shortcomings in their use for the transition to a low-carbon economy. On a positive note, owing to the coordination throughout the state sector and business associations, progress in the area of energy saving investments was reached.

Summary of Ratings

Note that the mark is recalculated.
A counts as "1", B as "2", C as "3", D as "4", F as "5".

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

SUBJECT-MATTER	MARK
Political engagement	3,50
Institutional cohesion	4,00
Strategic vision	4,00
Proactive approach	4,00
International relevance	3,75
AVERAGE	3,85

THEMATIC AND REGIONAL AREAS

SUBJECT-MATTER	MARK
Strategic Dimension of European Policy	2,00
Economic and Monetary Union	3,00
The European Union's Solution to the Refugee Crisis	3,50
Visegrad Cooperation	2,75
Visegrad Cooperation on Security and Defense Policy	2,75
Germany	2,00
Poland	2,50
United States of America	3,00
Russia	3,00
Ukraine	2,50
Eastern Partnership	2,00
Western Balkans	2,00
Wars in Syria and Iraq	3,00

SUBJECT-MATTER	MARK
Relations with Other Important Countries in the Middle East	2,00
China	2,00
South Korea	1,00
Human Rights and Transformation Cooperation	2,50
Czech NATO Policy	3,00
Foreign Exercise by the Czech Army in Response to the Refugee Crisis	2,50
Economic Diplomacy and Foreign Policy Priorities	3,50
Performance of Economic Diplomacy	2,00
Foreign Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance	2,75
Climate Policy	1,75
AVERAGE	2,48

OVERALL MARK

2,89**C+**

Recommendations for 2016

1. The Czech Republic should not be reactive or isolationist in its approach to the refugee crisis and should seek a solution that preserves and strengthens the Schengen system.

The free movement of people and other freedoms that ensue from EU membership represent one of the greatest achievements of European integration. It is in the eminent interest of the Czech Republic to help the EU emerge from the refugee crisis as a stronger and better functioning unit. Political representatives should not exploit the fears of society for short-term political gains. The Czech Republic is a prosperous and economically growing country, which makes short-sighted egoism in foreign policy utterly inexcusable. In emphasizing the protection of Schengen borders, the Czech Republic must be more actively involved in humanitarian activities in Middle East countries that have become the primary refuge of the majority of refugees. At the same time, it is important to realize that the only way to maintain the Schengen system is through reform of EU asylum policy. The basic goal of the Czech Republic should be to ensure uniform procedures and standards of protection during asylum proceedings in the EU. Czech and European asylum and migration policy must conform to international law. Lastly, the Czech Republic should accept a greater number of refugees from endangered areas and place them in a national integration program. The current Czech contribution does not correspond to its capacities.

2. The government should clearly distance itself from statements by the President that are not in line with its foreign policy.

The government must be able to substantively counter the damage to the Czech Republic's reputation caused by the President. It is not enough to simply emphasize that there is a difference between presidential rhetoric and official foreign policy. Without a concerted explanation of the government's position to the public and foreign partners, Czech diplomacy will remain unreadable. In addition to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, these tasks should also be undertaken by the Prime Minister. It would be wise to continue the consultation meetings of government officials. Discussion is beneficial under all circumstances. Nevertheless, we cannot pretend this will achieve consensus on a broad range of foreign policy issues.

3. The government should initiate national debate on the future of the Economic and Monetary Union and the role of the Czech Republic in it.

The year 2016 will be crucial in the discussion of the further development of the EMU. There has not yet been any true debate in the Czech Republic on the future of the euro area, thus a more sophisticated position on this matter has not been formed. Discussion should not only concern the economic impact, but also political and geopolitical effects. A strategic debate cannot be reduced

to the single question of adopting the common currency, although the process should lead to a clarification of this key dilemma of Czech European policy. At the same time, the Czech Republic should initiate a dialogue on the future of the EU budget after 2020.

4. The Czech Republic must continue to develop intensive relations with Germany and improve the image of the Czech Republic damaged by the Czech approach to the refugee crisis. One year before German federal elections, the portrayal of the Czech Republic as a problematic partner lacking solidarity threatens not only the future of Czech-German relations, but also the ability of Czech diplomacy to promote long-term European priorities. Senior government officials should refrain from broad and aggressive criticism of their German counterparts. Cooperation with German states should concern long-term matters (transportation or science and research) and the Czech Republic should not interfere in internal German debate on how to handle the refugee crisis. After the commencement of the Czech-German strategic dialogue, it is important to ensure that this format does not simply become formal routine, but that it serves to actually develop mutual relations.

5. The Czech Republic should be more actively involved in transformation and development assistance to Ukraine and be its credible partner. The Czech Republic should continue to actively support Ukrainian civil society promoting a full transformation of the country. On a European level, the Czech Republic must push for the continuation of sanctions against Russia, unless the conditions for lifting sanctions are met. The government must persistently counter the damaging politics of the President, on both a symbolic and rhetorical level. An appropriate step in this regard would be arranging a state visit by the Prime Minister to Ukraine, who should use this occasion to clearly state the Czech position.

6. The Czech Republic should fully support the countries of NATO's eastern wing at the NATO summit in Warsaw. The goal is the adaptation of NATO in a way that adequately responds to the worsening security situation in Eastern Europe. Credible deterrence must be achieved through a more robust NATO presence. Although the Czech Republic may not feel directly threatened, its vital interest is to ensure the security of all NATO members. Only such an

approach will strengthen confidence in its NATO commitments and show the Czech Republic to be a trusted ally.

7. Czech diplomacy should place greater emphasis on the humanitarian and human rights agenda in relation to the Middle East and North Africa.

In view of the refugee crisis and the fight against terrorism, it is not possible to continue to take this region lightly. A decision must be made on whether the key security interests of the Czech Republic are served more by an emphasis on the economic gains in relations with non-democratic regimes, or the promotion of human rights, the transformation agenda and a humanistic approach. It is clear, however, that maintaining friendly relations with Syrian President Assad and exporting arms to repressive regimes runs counter to finding any peaceful resolution to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

8. The Czech Republic should restart relations with Poland and improve the image of the Visegrad Group.

The Czech Republic should establish strong working contacts with the new Polish government. The joint meeting of intergovernmental delegations planned for the first half of the year should primarily focus on topics such as transportation infrastructure, environmental protection or consumer protection. The Czech Republic should consult Poland regarding the priorities of its Presidency in the Visegrad Group, as it directly follows the Czech Presidency. In doing so, it is essential to explain to Poland that any further rift between Western and Eastern Europe is not in Central European interests. The second half of the Czech Visegrad Presidency should focus on improving the image of the V₄ in the EU, which was tarnished by the dissenting approach to relocation quotas.

9. The New Silk Road project and other Chinese political initiatives must be intensively discussed with China.

Following a genuine national strategic debate on long-term goals to be pursued in mutual relations, the Czech Republic should engage in the potentially most beneficial initiatives. As part of the continuity of its foreign policy, the Czech Republic should also discuss human rights with China and supplement this dialogue with specific projects in areas in which it has experience, e.g. educating teachers or improving access to health care. In this regard, it can draw inspiration from the Netherlands, which has very successfully combined strong economic and political relations with the promotion of specific human rights.

10. In accordance with Sustainable Development Goals, the Czech Republic should lean towards a broader understanding of the context

of development and take development goals into account in other areas of domestic and foreign policy. Preparation of a new Concept for Foreign and Development Cooperation should be based on the development priorities of partner countries and should be defined in cooperation with their representatives. In the interest of efficiency, it would be advisable to focus Czech efforts on a narrower number of selected countries and sectors in the future, while at the same time gradually increasing the total amount of aid, so that the Czech Republic meets its international commitments in this area.

11. Political parties should respond to increasing public concern over international events by strengthening their professional capacities in these areas. Political elites must be able to respond to the concerns of society in a manner that does not further incite frustration, xenophobia and isolationism. The opposition should formulate a comprehensive foreign policy strategy that goes beyond individual statements on current affairs and encompasses a broader spectrum of issues. Political parties need to begin working on quality foreign policy manifestos a year before parliamentary elections.

ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS — AMO

Association for International Affairs is a non-governmental non-profit organization founded in 1997. The mission of AMO has been to contribute to a deeper understanding of international affairs through a broad range of educational and research activities. Thanks to its activities in the Czech Republic and abroad and 19-year tradition, AMO has established itself as the Czech leading independent institution in the field of international relations and foreign policy.

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE ITS GOALS AMO STRIVES TO:

- formulate and publish briefing, research and policy papers;
- arrange international conferences, expert seminars, roundtables, public debates;
- organize educational projects;
- present critical assessments and comments on current events for local and international press;
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- support interest in international relations in the wider public domain;
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