

Expert article 782

The Polish Presidency – priorities and challenges

By Radosław Sikorski

Poland will take over the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union in July. In the mere 1000 or so weeks since we held our first free elections after the fall of communism, we have joined the modern European family – and become able to shoulder the responsibility of modern European leadership.

These are interesting times to be taking over the EU Presidency. The European Union has to address the aftermath of the international economic crisis. Our Presidency also comes just as the pace of international events is accelerating. Decisions that will determine the shape of the EU for the next decade must be taken during the next two years.

In order for the European Union to successfully face the challenges ahead, it must look again at its economic and foreign policies. These are two areas the Polish Presidency plans to examine.

The EU was built on the idea that economic cooperation would bring peace to the nations of Europe. Today it is once again economic considerations that push us towards further European integration. Promoting growth in Europe will be the main goal of the Polish Presidency.

We must ensure the current economic crisis, the worst since the 1920s, is not repeated. For this, we need an effective exit strategy. Poland will continue to work on economic governance and fiscal consolidation, but we also need to stimulate community growth. If Europe is to overcome the economic crisis and remain competitive on a global scale, we need to develop growth strategies, not simply focus on repaying debts. Poland will therefore prioritise the single market, investment policies for the next multiannual financial framework, and intellectual capital.

Economic cooperation is essential for growth. It is at the heart of the new EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region, which will be reviewed during the Polish Presidency. Poland intends to hold a robust debate on this subject – a stakeholder's forum on the EU Strategy of the Baltic Sea Region is planned in Gdansk for October 2011. As European Commissioner for Regional Development Johannes Hahn put it: "The prize for getting it right will be a clean Baltic Sea, a more prosperous region, and a new model for cooperation to inspire other regions".

We want growth to become the new incentive for further European integration. To this end, Europe's financial, internal, military, energy and food security must be safeguarded. The Polish Presidency will focus on:

- financial security: the European Stabilisation Mechanism and other issues related to economic governance, such as the European Semester, in order to prevent another economic crisis;
- internal security: Integrated Border Management, intelligent borders and Frontex, in solidarity with Member States that are experiencing mass migration following events in North Africa;

- military security: aspects of the Common Security and Defence Policy (despite the progress made in the Lisbon Treaty), such as EU-NATO relations, the structures responsible for preparing and planning operations, and the promotion of freedom, security and justice;
- energy security: a thorough analysis of the EU's external energy policy and commencement of work on a new energy strategy for the next decade, in order to provide European companies with better access to resources;
- food security: discussions on a new post-2013 Common Agricultural Policy, with the purpose of ensuring the EU's needs are met at a time of soaring food prices.

Events like the Arab Spring or recent gas crises have repeatedly shown that the situation in Europe is heavily dependent on our relations with third countries. This should inform our external actions, including trade.

The Polish Presidency will strive to direct European resources and policies at sustained and responsible assistance for the people of the Middle East and North Africa. However, new challenges must not be allowed to eclipse important unfinished business. This is why we will not focus on the EU's southern neighbourhood to the detriment of the region we know best – Eastern Europe. The upcoming Eastern Partnership summit in Warsaw will provide an opportunity to improve the EU's offer to the East.

Another piece of unfinished business is the enlargement agenda. We would like to see Croatia's accession negotiations finalised and Turkey and Iceland's stepped up. Externally, Poland will support efforts to conclude the WTO Doha Round of negotiations. Negotiations with Russia will also take place during the Polish Presidency.

The goal of Poland's Presidency is a strong European Union. One that is ready to face the challenges ahead. One that releases the huge potential of its societies and enables their development through integration. One with economic and foreign policies that ensure its leading international position.

Poles are euro-enthusiasts – for us, the EU represents the aspirations that have guided us over the twenty-odd years we have been building the modern Polish state. It is with similar enthusiasm that we approach the task of our upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Radosław Sikorski

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Poland



To receive a free copy, register at www.tse.fi/pei

ISSN 1459-9759

Editor-in-Chief (Responsible for writer invitations): Kari Liuhto

Technical editor: Eini Laaksonen

University of Turku

Turku School of Economics, Pan-European Institute

Rehtorinpellonkatu 3, FI-20500 Turku, Finland

Tel. +358 2 333 9565, www.tse.fi/pei



Turun yliopisto
University of Turku

Turun kauppakorkeakoulu • Turku School of Economics