

Fredrik Langdal and Göran von Sydow (Eds.)

The Swedish Presidency: European Perspectives

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PREFACE

The Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies publishes a mid-term review for each Presidency of the Council, focusing on the agenda, the domestic and European setting. These reports are traditionally written by specialists from the country holding the Presidency. This autumn SIEPS has used a different approach; rather than inviting a Swedish expert to write on the Presidency we invited a number of scholars from around the European Union to write about the Swedish Presidency from their respective horizons. Four of the contributors are from countries which are part of the present or upcoming Trio and two have in some sense written from a Brussels perspective. It is hoped that the external perspectives included in this volume will help us better understand the performance of the Swedish Presidency. The volume is edited and introduced by SIEPS' researchers Fredrik Langdal and Göran von Sydow.

The Swedish Presidency has been devoted to the economy and employment, climate change, the Stockholm Programme, the Baltic Sea Strategy, the EU as a global actor and institutional and constitutional affairs. This agenda has been structured by the economic and financial crisis, the ratification and the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and the preparations ahead of the climate change conference in Copenhagen. Despite the exceptional context in which the Presidency is taking place one should not forget that a number of 'normal' policy-processes have been on-going during this autumn which may not get many headlines but which are nonetheless important.

Anna Stellingner
Director, SIEPS

The Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, SIEPS, conducts and promotes research and analysis of European policy issues. The results are presented in reports and at seminars. SIEPS strives to act as a link between the academic world and policy-makers at various levels.

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INTRODUCTION: INTERIM JUDGEMENTS OF THE SWEDISH EU PRESIDENCY

Fredrik Langdal and Göran von Sydow

A mid-term review of a European Union Presidency is always quite provisional in nature and by definition precludes analysis of long term effects. Nonetheless, analysing the achievements and failures of an on-going process, assessing both immediate and possible long-term effects, has a certain value through providing a snap-shot of how a Presidency was viewed at the time but also as a contemporary source for those following European politics. In this short introduction we will give a brief overview of the performance of the Swedish EU Presidency thus far, highlighting the findings of the six contributions written by scholars from the same number of countries. The contributors to this volume were asked to provide an assessment of the Presidency informed by their national perspectives and by a set of questions provided in the annex to this volume. Of particular interest, apart from perceptions on achievements, is the question of which roles the Presidency is seen as performing.

In a preview published when the Presidency began we wrote that:

To conclude this analysis we will address the question of how we believe the Swedish Presidency will be evaluated with the benefit of hindsight. Apart from organisational efficiency, there are at least three crucial tasks which will form the basis for *ex post* evaluations of the Swedish Presidency, two general and one specific to this Presidency. First, the handling of the unexpected crises will be central ... Second, if the Presidency manages to make a lasting constructive impact on either policy or on procedures this will naturally contribute to a positive evaluation. Finally, and this is a challenge set for the Swedish Presidency, how it will handle the climate change negotiations in Copenhagen.¹

In the happy absence of a serious unexpected crisis we have structured the findings of the contributors around the prioritised themes of the Presidency.

The constitutional questions

The constitutional reform process of the last seven years came to an end during the Swedish Presidency, which was a relief for most actors involved in the process and especially so for the Swedish Presidency. Two distinct features of this process affected the Swedish Presidency: the ratification process and the implementation of the Treaty.

¹ Langdal, Fredrik and von Sydow, Göran, *The Swedish 2009 EU Presidency: The Setting, Priorities and Roles*, EPA 2009:7, SIEPS, p. 16.

The role of the Presidency in the ratification process is minimal under normal circumstances as this process is theoretically a purely national one. Nonetheless, the restraint and low-key approach preferred by the Swedish Presidency has earned it esteem from some quarters and this applies in particular, as Král points out in this volume, to the handling of President Klaus in the Czech Republic. It is easy to imagine another country from the Trio taking a completely different approach had the Czech situation arisen a year earlier. Rather, a strategy aimed at not raising the political stakes, mainly characterised by private rather than public discussions, seems to have been appropriate for finalising the ratification process.

The preparations for the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty have also deeply affected the Swedish Presidency. On the one hand, it has been time and resource consuming for the Swedish Presidency, finalising rules of procedures, addressing budgetary implications and sorting out constitutional anomalies. On the other hand, as holders of the Presidency, the Swedes have also had opportunities for influencing the outcome of these processes. Whether these opportunities were seized upon or not is a question for future research but one can at this point note that the rules of procedure and the necessary provisions were mostly in place for 1 December while some thorny issues such as the number of MEP's and if the Foreign Ministers are to be allowed to attend the European Council remain to be solved at the time of writing. However, as pointed out by Kaczyński, one can criticise the Swedish Presidency for not focusing on the job descriptions of the President of the European Council and the High Representative *before* the appointments were made.

The institutional questions

The main institutional challenges that the Swedish Presidency had to manage were threefold. First, there was a new European Parliament elected which had to find its mode of operation. Second, the outgoing and incoming Commission added to the uncertainty and lack of speed in the policy-making process. Thirdly, under the Lisbon Treaty two new posts as President of the European Council and High Representative for Foreign Affairs had to be filled. Regarding the European Parliament there is some anecdotal evidence that it tried to stall some legal acts until after the Lisbon Treaty had entered into force in the areas where it were to gain a greater influence which reduced the flow of legislation during the autumn. It should be noted here that the autumn of 2009 was never expected to be an autumn characterised by the passage of a lot of legislation but rather an autumn of managing a number of externally dictated agendas where key decisions were not of legislative nature.

Secondly, the appointments of a Commission and of a new President of the Commission have also been central and even though the re-appointment of Barroso was delayed and the new college of commissioners remains to be approved by the European Parliament, the process has moved forward. However, as Palmer points out, the European Parliament may be keen to flex its reinforced political muscles, and in particular Baroness Ashton may be in for some tough questioning. Consequently, this process may still present some hurdles, if not for the Swedes, then for the Spaniards in the first half of 2010.

Thirdly, and perhaps most controversial has been the appointment of the two new top positions. In the words of Kaczyński, the combination of secrecy, lack of job descriptions and leaving the initiative to France, Germany and the UK amounts to a 'cloud in the sky of good news [coming from the Swedish Presidency]'. Molina, echoes the concerns regarding the secrecy but underlines that an agreement taking into account the various internal balances was reached and gives more credit to the work done by the Presidency. If the interpretation of Kaczyński is correct then it would point to a situation where the Swedish Presidency was side-stepped both as a broker and an agenda-setter leaving the large Member States to sort out an acceptable deal. Regardless of what one thinks about the actual choices, it is worth noting that it says something about the planned roles for these actors and our interpretation, far from unconventional, is that the Member States are not willing to yield much power to supranational actors and bodies in the areas concerned.

Climate change

The climate change negotiations were listed as a top priority for the Swedish Presidency but expectations of a comprehensive and legally binding deal in Copenhagen have gradually been lowered during 2009. At the time of writing the climate change conference in Copenhagen, COP15, has just begun and it is thus not possible to give even a provisional verdict of how the Presidency has succeeded in relation to Copenhagen. The main roles set out for the Presidency were first to uphold the climate agreement of the EU and to ensure that the EU was able to act collectively. Second, the Presidency was expected to broker a deal on the distribution of costs between the Member States and finally to represent the EU at the negotiating table in Copenhagen.

The findings that emerge from the contributions are that intra EU-coordination has not broken down as of yet but the thorny issue of distributing the costs between Member States remains to be settled and Král accounts

for the main divide within the EU on which basis contributions should be calculated. The failure to reach an agreement on the financial contributions has, according to Kaczyński, weakened the Union's political authority. Another big challenge for the Swedish delegation will be the actual negotiations in Copenhagen and in particular, as underlined by Molina, to 'press China and the US for much more ambitious plans'. Rather than speculating on the outcome we would rather here underline that effective internal brokerage and the external representation has been – and will continue to be – crucial in avoiding a breakdown of the negotiations.

On a domestic level we might add that this is one out of two areas where the Presidency has suffered from serious criticism from the domestic opposition. The opposition has criticised both the form (lack of leadership) and content (too low ambitions) of the government in its presidency role.

The financial and economic crisis

The management of the economic crisis has been one of the two top priorities of the Presidency. As pointed out in several of the contributions to this volume, ever since the outbreak of the financial and economic crisis in 2008 no presidency of the EU can afford not to focus on issues related to this. The Swedish Presidency has had to deal with, among many other things with; the regulations of the financial markets, the preparations of the EU ahead of the G20 meetings, the long term effects of the crisis and the present and future state of the public finances.

The challenge for the Swedish Presidency in relation to the supervision of the financial markets has been to foster a common understanding among the Member States on how to design a common European system of supervision. A point highlighted by Fabry in this volume is that the diverging preferences concerning the scope of the proposed supervisory bodies forced the Presidency to act as an honest broker in order to achieve the desired results.

Král points to the low expectations of what the EU actually can do to fight the economic crisis. Issues relating to economic recovery include the support of industries and rise of employment as well as the long term stability of public finances. As the economic crisis unfolded, national solutions to support domestic production and employment surfaced. As Král points out, it has been important from the Swedish perspective, to fight tendencies towards protectionism, a view shared by the Czech Trio-colleague.

Molina identifies three areas of importance for the link between the upcoming Spanish Presidency 2010 and the current Swedish one. First,

regarding public finances Spain is in a weaker position than Sweden, as it is one of the countries struggling with excessive deficits at the moment. While Sweden can, by virtue of its relative good performance in this respect, argue forcefully for stability in public finances, the Spanish government has argued that continuing stimulus of the economy is necessary for swift recovery. Second, the fact that Sweden is a euro-outsider is put forward as a constraining factor for taking the lead on issues relating to the financial markets. Third, the main task of the in-coming Spanish Presidency will be the agreement on the post-Lisbon strategy in March 2010. The Swedish government will try to shape the contents of this strategy by linking short-term crisis management with long term strategy development. The focus on research and development fits nicely with the Spanish focus, while too strong a focus on labour market reform is seen as problematic for the Spanish. On this point, Fabry advances some critique towards the Swedish Presidency for not questioning the current trend of primarily national solutions to solve the economic crisis and for “underestimating the need for a strong start to a more coherent and coordinated European approach to sustainable growth”. Palmer advances criticism about the lack of proposals towards more relevant measures of sustainable social and economic progress. Ágh argues that the assessment of the Swedish Presidency depends on the role Sweden plays in the preparation of the new long-term agenda. He emphasises the Swedish contributions in the field of the social dimension of the next Lisbon strategy, but that the final verdict of the presidency’s success will depend on the conclusions of the summit in December.

The Stockholm Programme

Cooperation in the area of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) has been guided by five year programmes or agendas since 1999. The Hague programme which stretches between 2004 and 2009 expires during the Swedish Presidency is to be succeeded by a Stockholm programme covering the areas justice, freedom and security. The elaboration of this programme does therefore add to the list of priorities already in the pipeline. The programme will deal with issues such as free movement of persons, Schengen, asylum, immigration, judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters, data protection, fundamental rights, racism, crime prevention and fight against organised crime. The Swedish government has pursued a more liberal regime in the area of asylum and migration, something that seems to at least partially have paid off and the Stockholm Programme will be adopted at the European Council in December. Nonetheless, there has been domestic opposition regarding the content of the programme.

Molina highlights that Spain is closely following the final negotiations of the programme as the Action Plan for implementing the programme will be agreed during the Spanish semester. The other contributions of this volume do not specifically address the Stockholm Programme.

The EU, the neighbourhood and the world

Being the last of the old-style presidencies, Sweden has not really had any choice but to devote substantial attention to the international role of the EU. The Presidency programme consists of a rather lengthy list of areas where the EU would be expected to act. The list includes *inter alia*; further enlargement process, the neighbourhood policy (including the Eastern Partnership), negotiations of free trade agreements and a number of geographically defined issues including relations to Russia, the situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as the Middle-East.

The contributors to this volume stress the fact that the Swedish Presidency has been lucky not to have to deal with any major global crises during its tenure. While the Trio-colleagues France and Czech Republic have been faced with overt conflicts in Georgia and the Middle East, the Swedes have thus far not been tested when it comes to crisis management. It is therefore not possible to assess how well the coordination from Stockholm in the event of crisis would have worked, nor is it possible to grade the leadership and negotiation skills of Swedish top politicians in a situation of acute crisis. However, the global role of the EU is not solely or even mainly about crisis management. Palmer points in his contribution to the underdeveloped relations between the EU and Russia, but that some advances were made at the summit in November and Fabry to the adoption of the action plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan

To the surprise of some, the Swedish government has not held the further enlargement of the EU at the very top of their priorities. However, during its tenure there has been some progress as concerns the prospects of the Western Balkans. This point is stressed by Král who assesses the efforts positively with the exception of the Presidency's unwillingness to engage in the border dispute between Croatia and Slovenia. Molina reports some critical remarks in Spain about how Sweden abandoned the role of the honest broker when supporting an Icelandic fast-track to membership. However, in general, the contributions devote little attention to the international role of the presidency, something that should be seen in light of relative absence of crises and perhaps also that the EU has been preoccupied with internal business during the period.

The Baltic Sea Strategy

The most obvious example of the Swedish Presidency acting as an agenda-setter is the Baltic Sea Strategy which was adopted by the European Council in late October. The rationale behind this first ‘intra-EU macro-regional strategy’ is to address problems that are specific to – and common for – a certain geographical area. As the strategy has been adopted this must be seen as tangible step forward for the Swedish Presidency but the legacy of the decision is impossible to estimate at the time of writing and it is first in three or four years one can sensibly evaluate if the strategy has produced the desired results.

What emerges from the contributions is a rather distinct disinterest in the strategy. Fabry describes the Strategy as ‘well prepared’ and as being supported by a broad consensus thus making it into the priorities despite the large number of more important challenges that the Presidency was facing.

It seems clear that the Baltic Sea Strategy is part of continuous process which aims at shifting the focus to certain geographical areas. As Molina points out, the French were prioritising the Mediterranean Union, the Czechs the Eastern Partnership, the Spaniards will look towards South and North America and Hungary towards the Danube region. If the politics of territoriality had been one-dimensional it would be tempting to describe the process as a pendulum movement.

Concluding remarks

As seen from the summary of the different prioritised areas of the Swedish Presidency, the contributors to this volume share several views. The main achievement during the Swedish Presidency thus far has been the successful ratification and implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. This can partly be credited to the Presidency, partly to luck and partly to other actors such as the Irish citizenry. The handling of the Czech ratification is unanimously seen as skilled. When it comes to the institutional issues, including the nomination of the top jobs, the Presidency itself is not criticised for its actions even if the outcome is not greeted with enthusiasm by all. The contributors also share the view that the negotiations about the successor of the Kyoto protocol in Copenhagen will be defining for the Presidency. Concerning to Swedish achievements in leading the EU in both fighting the economic crisis and providing input to the long-term economic agenda of the EU the views are quite diverging.

When it comes to the *style* of the Presidency, most contributions points to the relatively smooth and consensus-oriented leadership of Sweden. The

stark differences in style between the Trio-colleagues France, Czech Republic and Sweden are highlighted by many and in this context Sweden comes out in a positive light. The role that best characterises the Swedish Presidency is – with few exceptions – that of the presidency as *honest broker*, paying more attention to finding common solutions than pushing their own interests and agenda. The most obvious cases of Swedish agenda-setting (i.e. the Baltic Sea Strategy) are largely ignored in the contributions. In terms of the organisation of the Presidency, the contributions that do touch upon this issue do not question Sweden's way of organising its Presidency.

To conclude, if no major crisis emerges in the final stage of the Presidency it will continue to be considered as a rather lucky presidency in this respect. The setting of the Presidency when taking the chair was rather gloomy with uncertainties about the Treaty, economic crisis and institutional flux. Closer to the end of its term, the Lisbon Treaty is in force, top jobs assigned, a Commission nominated and signs of an economic up-turn are visible. This cannot single-handedly be credited to the Swedish Presidency, but it is at least safe to conclude that things could have gone much worse. The final test of the Presidency will be negotiating an agreement in Copenhagen. A good result there will, according to the contributors in this volume, be decisive for the final assessment of the Swedish 2009 EU Presidency.

SWEDEN'S EUROPEAN UNION PRESIDENCY: A POSITIVE BUT INTERIM JUDGEMENT

John Palmer

A match of two halves

There is a well known cliché in English football journalism that a really important match is often “a game of two halves.” This cliché can equally well be applied to judgements about the performance of European Union Presidencies. At the end of the first half of the Swedish Presidency – that is at the end of September – it would have been difficult to be enthusiastic about the results of the Presidency. But now that we are well into the second half, there is much more to be positive about.

The great achievement of the Swedish Presidency was surely to rescue the Lisbon Treaty from disaster – at almost the 11th hour and to succeed in solving the Rubic Cube problem of getting consensus on the appointment of the new President of the European Council and the High Representative for Foreign and Security policy/vice-President of the European Commission. In other areas the Swedish government made commendable, workman like progress on a range of issues, rather than emerging with final solutions.

The truth is that even a full six month tenure as Presidency is – in modern conditions – a ludicrously short period of time in which to “achieve results”. More typically these days results are achieved over a period of years. One example of this longer term time horizon might be Sweden’s important success in encouraging a European Union model of sustainable economic development. This is something which began with a Swedish Presidency more than a decade ago and has still to be fully realised! Of course this reflects the complexities of changing the priorities of 27 different Member State governments - all of which wrestle with different problems and circumstances and have differing societal priorities.

The long term agenda with which the Swedish Presidency is wrestling has, therefore, been advanced. But challenges such as climate change, financial regulation, economic crisis recovery strategy and the related post-Lisbon Process objectives of economic reform, sustainable development and greater social cohesion will all remain on the EU agenda for some time to come.

Jury out on climate change

The October Brussels European Council did provide an opportunity to review progress to date. On climate change the most which can be said – and it is positive – is that the EU resolved enough problems to sustain progress towards agreeing the final European Union mandate for the Copenhagen world climate change summit in December. At least the broad parameters of the EU economic aid which must be provided for developing countries – as well as the medium term 2020 carbon reduction targets – have been agreed.

That said, the Swedish Presidency still has to secure agreement on the internal EU arrangements for funding aid to the poorest countries globally to assist them to meet the carbon reduction targets. This is proving no easy matter. The newer EU Member States in Central and Eastern Europe will not accept the kind of burden share envisaged for them by some of the richer EU governments. But with administrations everywhere under increasing pressure to reign in rapidly expanding budget deficits, the Swedish Presidency-led negotiations about an EU funding arrangement remain perilously poised.

The “moment of truth” for the Swedish Presidency and the European Union on whether momentum towards an agreement on climate change can be sustained from now on will be resolved by the December European Council. On that occasion the Swedish Presidency must emerge with a detailed agreement on how the financing of total EU aid to poorer countries is to be divided between the 27 EU Member States. Without such a deal, the EU’s political authority in Copenhagen will be much reduced.

It has also become clear over recent months that the United States will not be in a position to conclude a legally binding agreement in Copenhagen. This has less to do with the political will of the Obama Administration than the immense and complicated problems surrounding the passage of the President’s health care reform in Congress. The low key tone of the recent US/EU summit in Washington provided confirmation of this sombre reality.

This means that the most which can be expected from Copenhagen is a firm series of “politically” if not “legally” binding understandings about climate change goals. These “understandings” will then have to be converted into a detailed global climate change treaty. Fortunately, following the China/US summit meeting in Beijing, it seems both governments may be willing to enter into substantial and detailed political agreements on CO₂ reductions.

A further attempt at finalising a legally binding global agreement will then have to be made at another world summit next year – either in Germany in mid year or in Mexico in December 2010. This will therefore probably take place either during the Spanish or the Belgian phase of the Spanish/Belgian/Hungarian EU Team Presidency – the first of its kind – which will hold office for the 18 months beginning in January 2010.

The uncertainties of economic upturn

Meanwhile progress in agreeing a comprehensive economic recovery strategy remains painfully slow and may have to wait on a formal review of the Lisbon economic reform process due to begin under Spain's Presidency next spring. Much the same is true as regards the related goal of greater energy security and supply. The key question remains above all else *how* to integrate EU policy in all of these inter-related but quite distinct fields.

One disappointment is that the Swedish Presidency – so far at least – has been very reticent about indicating a more relevant macro-economic measure of genuinely sustainable and socially cohesive economic progress than can be reflected in narrow GDP figures. Swedish ministers have – rightly – pointed out that crude GDP numbers can present a misleading or distorted picture of comprehensive economic advance. But there were hopes that Stockholm would have capitalised on the work which has gone on internationally to encourage – however tentatively – a new matrix for setting and measuring sustainable economic targets.

Some interesting language on the need to streamline European representation in the increasingly important global economic decision making bodies such as the G20 and the Bretton Woods institutions was included in the October European Council. But this will, above all, require a strengthening of the collective decision making potential of the euro-area bodies. It is not clear whether EU governments are ready to deliver on these desirable aspirations. Sweden influence on this vital matter has been limited given its non accession to the euro.

The Lisbon Treaty – at last

The most notable success for which the Swedish Presidency can claim major credit was, of course, the successful steering of the final, very fraught, stages of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. The way was opened by the massive Irish “Yes” vote for the treaty in their second referendum. But matters were not made easier by the thoroughly irresponsible behaviour of the Czech President in seeking to block the final stages of ratification.

The Treaty is now in place and serious work can begin on implementing its important reforms. The immediate challenge for the Swedish Presidency after ratification was to secure a consensus agreement on the key appointments which can be made now to the new offices created by the Lisbon Treaty – above all the chairman of the European Council and the new High Representative (de facto “Foreign Minister”) for EU Foreign and Security policy.

At a special “dinner summit” on November 19, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt was able to win unanimous backing for the appointment of Herman Van Rompuy as President (better described as “chairman”) of the European Council and Baroness Ashton as the first ever joint High Representative for CFSP/vice-President of the Commission.

The speed of the final agreement took many observers by surprise and seems to have been achieved as a result of the Swedish premier’s readiness to move rapidly to a vote. This had the effect of forcing the British Prime Minister to accept that his campaign to have Tony Blair adopted as President of the Council had no real support. As a consequence – and seemingly at short notice – the British government won support from the socialist heads of government for the current trade Commissioner, Cathy Ashton.

The Commission President, José Manuel Barroso, still has to finalise the selection members of the new college – hopefully being able to exercise the greater authority in this matter which the Treaty gives the Commission President. It seems that all but four or five of the college places have been filled and that the new Commission contains significantly more women than the outgoing Commission – something which the Swedish Presidency had been pressing very strongly.

Even after this stage is successfully navigated, the nominations will have to be approved by the European Parliament. This is something which should not be taken for granted not least because the elected members of the new European Parliament emerge following the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty as a significantly more politically potent body than ever. MEPs may, in particular, want to question Baroness Ashton closely on her plans for launching the new External Action Service and utilising her prerogative to propose foreign policy initiatives to the Council.

Much remains unclear about the details of how each of the new offices will relate to the other, to the Commission President and the continuing, but reduced, system of rotating presidencies. Sweden has however demonstrated its capacity for a level headed efficiency by quietly instigating

informal COREPER discussions – under Presidency chairmanship – in recent months to begin to make progress. These have cleared the way for agreement on many of the details of how the chairman of the European Council, the High Representative and the rotating presidencies will function in practice. As a consequence some of the worst potential “turf war” problems should be avoided.

Making a reality of Common Foreign and Security Policy

The Swedish Presidency has been lucky not to have to face any major global political crisis during its tenure. However serious global crises remain beneath the surface. They include the worrying lack of progress in persuading Israel to join a renewed peace negotiation with the Palestinians, the increasingly obvious failure of the US/NATO led war in Afghanistan and the unresolved questions surrounding the future political security relationship between the EU and Russia.

The Washington summit also underlined the *malaise* which currently characterises the wider EU-US relationship. This is partly a result of the slow progress in the Obama Administration in making up its mind about key security issues above all how to conduct the war in Afghanistan. But it also seems to reflect a growing discontent in Washington at the failure of the EU to develop both a clear foreign and security policy direction of its own or a demonstrated capacity to implement such a strategy.

In the short time left for the Swedish Presidency it will be all the more important to ensure the closest coordination between EU and US policy on action to counter the economic crisis and implement a more effective global system of regulation of the financial markets. But Stockholm can take some of the credit for the very limited recourse to explicit or even implicit forms of trade protectionism in the European Union during the crisis thus far.

The limited results of the EU/Russia summit reflected the underdevelopment of a detailed common European strategy – something for which the Swedish Presidency cannot be held singularly responsible. Fortunately the summit did seem to advance the commitment Russia is now ready to make on climate change even though a worrying gulf still separates the two parties on most other issues.

Once the new High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy is in place and the new European External Action Service begins to function, there will be far less justification for the important areas of ambiguity and confusion which surround EU policy towards its relationship with both

the US and Russia and – indeed – many other external policy areas. This continuing ambiguity is particularly unhelpful regarding the future of EU Neighbourhood Policy which lacks any Russian dimension.

Conclusion

Although it is too soon to make any final judgement on the Swedish Presidency, it has clearly demonstrated the efficiency and hard work we traditionally associate with Swedish (more generally Nordic) Presidencies. Real commitment to the most important priorities has been demonstrated. But it would have been good to have seen more of the longer term strategic vision which lies behind Sweden's commitment to a new, sustainable economic and social model for Europe.

If the French/Czech/Swedish Presidency demonstrated none of the desirable characteristics of a genuinely "Trio Presidency" this was not the fault of the Swedish government. For very different reasons and motivated by very different aspirations, France and the Czech Republic ran their Presidencies as a narrowly nationally-focussed enterprise. Hopefully the incoming Spanish/Belgian/Hungarian Team Presidency will show that serious coordination between the three partners is possible and productive. The fact that the three heads of government will jointly present their 18 month programme perspective to the European Parliament in January is an encouraging sign.

THE BRUSSELS PERSPECTIVE ON THE SWEDISH PRESIDENCY

Piotr Maciej Kaczyński

In general, the Swedish Presidency has been making a very good job of navigating through the difficult waters of the European Union. It needs to be mentioned, however, that there are three elements that have made this presidency easier to manage: first, there was a major turn in the story of ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, which – following the second referendum on the issue in Ireland – came rather smoothly into force on 1 December 2009. The second element is the new government in Berlin, which ends the German six months – at least – of decision-making paralysis. The third element that made the Swedish Presidency relatively easier is that – to date – there has been no major *new* international crisis to manage. Understandably, that does not mean that “luck” is primarily responsible for the thus far very good performance. Dedication on the side of the Swedish leaders and careful preparation for the role are the predominant reasons for this positive grade.

There is one cloud in the sky of good news. The way the permanent President of the European Council and the new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy were appointed was, to say the least, doubtful. Secrecy was one problem – it was telling that Sweden was taught about transparency by former Communist nations. Yet much more significant was the problem of *no job descriptions*. Understandingly, the governments’ natural tendency is to take political decisions on top positions in secrecy. This was no different on 19 November 2009. However, it would be the responsibility of a leader to lead the process. The Swedes were not leading the process despite many rounds of telephone diplomacy performed by Prime Minister Reinfeldt – the key decisions were made by France, Germany and the United Kingdom. The rest, together with the Presidency, watched the show. One way to change things could have been to take the initiative on creating a sort of job description – asking the countries *what* those new leaders were supposed to do. Instead, it was said that the leaders chosen would determine the allocation of tasks. Only on the day of the European Council were there rumours that the European Council had decided to write job descriptions: to limit the competences as much as possible. True or not, the other 24 states watched passively as decisions were taken on who would be – to use the press language – Europe’s first President and Europe’s first Foreign Minister (“Mr and Mrs Nobody”). Had there been a job description outlining at

least the necessary experience, maybe the chosen persons would not have to face allegations of being “the lowest common denominator”.

It needs to be remembered, however, that besides the institutional questions and treaty ratification challenges, the most important *policy* decisions of the current term will come only in the second half of the presidency: the December Copenhagen UN Climate Change Conference and the decision on the financial regulatory system are still to be taken – those two elements, together with the institutional struggle, will determine overall the fate of the Swedish EU Presidency 2009.

The priorities

The Swedish Presidency priorities were the following six: (1) economy and employment; (2) the climate agreement; (3) the Stockholm Programme; (4) the Baltic Sea Strategy; (5) the EU, the neighbourhood and the world; and (6) the institutional and constitutional questions.

The selection of the priorities has been made well. The combination reflects very well the standard shape of a presidency programme (consisting of three elements: one on internal markets; the second on justice and home affairs; and the third on the external issues). In this case it refers to the employment challenges, the Stockholm Programme and the neighbourhood/world parts. It also integrates well a “Swedish” element into it: the Baltic Sea Strategy. Finally, there are the two massive externalities (to the presidency): the climate change negotiations and the institutional developments. In the end, the programme priorities are cohesive and there is little that has not been addressed (i.e. security). It may be that, for the future rotating presidencies, the classical trio – of internal market; justice and police cooperation; and external policies – will be replaced by internal market; justice and police cooperation; and energy security/climate change.

It is impossible to address accordingly the question of whether the Presidency met the expectations. This largely remains to be seen and depends on the outcomes of the December Copenhagen Conference. So far, on all fronts, the Presidency is doing well, with some criticism over the October European Council decisions (somewhat unconvincing) on financing the climate change in the developing world.

As far as the institutional issues are concerned, the Presidency has performed very well. Probably, the issue so far has been dominating the Presidency, maybe even over-dominating it. No one seemed to challenge the Swedish actions from the formal perspective. The Swedes were respectful of other nations in leading the process, but they were also

helped massively by the outcome of the second Irish vote. There were a few elements in the process:

- the Irish campaign: no role (which was the right choice to make);
- the Czech ratification problem: excellent work (active engagement) in guaranteeing President Klaus's signature;
- assisting President Kaczyński of Poland when he asked for Prime Minister Reinfeldt to be present.

Organisation

The Swedish EU Presidency is perceived as highly skilful, well organized and well prepared. The presence, comments and leadership of Prime Minister Reinfeldt, Foreign Minister Bildt and the Europe Minister Malmström are well regarded. One example of those skills was shown during the October 2009 European Council, when there was gossip among journalists that Prime Minister Reinfeldt's name had been mentioned as a potential European Council permanent President come January 2010. He denied the rumours. Proof of the smooth organisation is the lack of negative comments, which were present during the recent French and Czech Presidencies.

The above-mentioned problems with the nomination of new EU posts blurred the picture somewhat. However, even during the November European Council, the Swedish Presidency played a good role of an honest broker. The Swedes have proven that their skills in arriving at consensus are very good, maybe sometimes at the price of the contents of the agreement (i.e. financing of the climate change, October 2009; qualifications of candidates selected, November 2009). The role as an agenda-setter has been limited during this six months due to the institutional debates (a new treaty, but also the new incoming European Commission and the newly elected European Parliament only starting to operate), but there were a few potentially important new developments: the establishment of the Transatlantic Energy Council and the adoption of the Baltic Sea Strategy. The role of the representative was – so far – minimal in the various summits; yet this role is highly predetermined by the new international developments. It needs to be pointed out that – once again – the EU was rather fragmented then unified during the G20 meeting in Pittsburgh and, hence, the role of the Presidency was limited.

Clearly, the most important leadership-providing moment to date is the completion of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. This could not be possible without an active role of the Presidency and the personal engage-

ment of Prime Minister Reinfeldt and his cabinet ministers in directly negotiating the final deal with the Czech Republic.

The upcoming Climate Change Conference is yet another opportunity to manifest EU leadership skills, especially as the EU Presidency has acquired the right to represent the entire EU at the UN level during those talks. However, the understanding is that it will be a major challenge for the Swedes to convince the public that, whatever the outcome from Copenhagen, it will be a success; and if there is a success – that it is the result of their skills (rather than, say, the Americans negotiating with the Chinese). On other elements, should the Baltic Sea Strategy prove to be relevant, then the Swedish idea will be yet another – ex-post – example of the Swedish Presidency's leadership skills.

Trio Presidency

Politically speaking, there was no trio. The Swedish Presidency is the first *traditionally good* EU Presidency after a successful – but also extravagant and innovative – French EU Presidency and a bumpy and uneven Czech one. The Swedes have proven that a smaller EU nation can successfully navigate through the EU waters, but have also proven that internal organisation and external trust towards the country are crucial in executing the function.

Conclusion

Within the remaining time, there will still be a few occasions to manifest leadership skills and deliver on policies. The single most important challenge is the December UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. The second set of decisions might prove tricky (as seen during the November European Council) in the area of institutional issues (the rules of procedure of the European Council; the new European Commission); and the third policy challenge is the financial supervision package. Nevertheless, because of the work so far it is expected that – at least from the Brussels perspective – the Swedish Presidency can already be regarded as quite successful.

THE SWEDISH PRESIDENCY: A VIEW FROM PARIS

Elvire Fabry

Any appraisal of a presidency of the European Union at mid-mandate is inevitably somewhat impressionist and irrelevant as the most sensitive negotiations are often kept for the final run and dealt with at the European Council ending the presidency. The final impression made by the French Presidency was indeed very much influenced by the agreement on the energy and climate package that was negotiated during the last hours of the December 2008 Council. Obviously, had this negotiation failed, the general impression would have been very different.

In the case of the Swedish Presidency, there is also the impact of the summer break and the interferences of the recent election of the European Parliament and the current process of renewing the Commission. Actually, the Swedish Presidency had only two and a half months to produce any meaningful work. Conversely, it has benefited from the well-known Treaty of Nice rules, which remain in force today, whereas the Spanish Presidency will have to deal with the new rules of the Lisbon Treaty.

Perception of the Swedish Presidency in Paris

Because of its involvement in the Trio of presidencies for the period from July 2008 to December 2009, France certainly has a specific perception of the Swedish Presidency. From the beginning, this Trio was recognized as illustrating the diversity of interests existing in the EU: free trade and the accession of Turkey to the EU were two emblematic issues with differing national opinions. In addition, the high ambitions France had for its Presidency had certainly not made the coordination of the Trio easier. However, the severe comments made by the French regarding the failures they perceived in the Czech Presidency might eventually benefit the Swedish Presidency. The Swedish Presidency started with a sense of relief, with a stable pro-European national government and its well-acknowledged political pragmatism. Having had to face unexpected events such as the global economic crisis and the Georgian crisis, the French government is well placed to recognize the many complex challenges the Swedish Presidency is facing. In addition, the French public opinion is going through what could be called the post-EU Presidency intensive communication effect. After intense coverage of the French Presidency, the national media are suffering from a saturation effect and failing to cover the current presidency as much as they should. The implicit effect on the French public opinion is the impression of a very discrete Swedish Presidency that could be wrongly assimilated to weak leadership. Yet well-informed

analysts acknowledge Swedish pragmatism as delivering well without boasting.

Priorities management

The Presidency inherited a very heavy agenda with many complex battle-fronts. The Baltic Sea Strategy voluntarily placed by the Swedish Government on the presidential agenda may not have been a priority in the present crisis context but it was well prepared before the beginning of the Swedish Presidency and supported by a large consensus. In addition it may help in the future elaboration of a common European policy regarding Russia.

Inversely, although the Presidency was ready to face any possible new crisis, its reactivity to the milk crisis has been slow. When on Monday 21 September several countries asked to hold an extraordinary meeting of agriculture ministers on the milk crisis, the Swedish Presidency refused, considering – with the support of the European Commission and a few other countries – that there was no formal proposal from the Commission for the dairy sector. It was only under the growing pressure of 19 Member States that the decision to hold an extraordinary meeting was finally taken days afterwards.

However, the main expectations of the Swedish Presidency will remain focused on the institutional issue (the end of the ratification process and its implementation, with key nominations in November 2009) and the preparation of the Copenhagen Summit (the capacity to have the 27 speaking with 1 voice, and achieving an ambitious international commitment to carbon emission reduction).

Swedish Presidency outcomes according to expectations

The clear Irish “yes” has helped accelerate the process of obtaining the signatures of Lech Kaczynski and Václav Klaus. Yet, the Swedish Presidency has successfully kept a focused agenda on this issue. Nonetheless, the weariness of the long ratification process has led to the consideration of opt-out solutions for Ireland and the Czech Republic that are harmful to the perception of citizens as regards European cohesion. The benefits of the new Lisbon rules should quickly be put to the public opinions in order to close this chapter. In this respect the role of the Swedish Presidency in the choice of the permanent President of the Council and the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy has not been well understood and is considered as a very opaque negotiation. On other issues, the Swedish Presidency is coherent with its intention to deliver on

policies where the EU can have added value without trying to look for European systematic interventionism.

A well-prepared Presidency team

Swedish ministers and the Swedish administration have given the impression that they were well prepared for this intensive run and the Presidency is certainly benefiting from the European policy experience of Carl Bildt and Cecilia Malmström. From the outset Sweden has cautiously avoided announcing targets that are too ambitious for each issue and it is, step by step, achieving progress with a low profile attitude. After the 29–30 October Council much attention has been given to the institutional agreement with Václav Klaus, but the Swedish Presidency has also succeeded in clearing the EU mandate for the December international climate negotiations and managed to raise the issue of national public deficits.

However, despite the efforts made by the Swedish Presidency to provide a good level of information on its achievements (the innovative concept of the se2009.eu website), it might have underestimated the need for proactive communication. On the scale of a population of 500 million, transparency does not compensate for a lack of political marketing. In the context of the global crisis, citizens expect European institutions to take strong initiatives and prove their leadership by key statements. The restoration of confidence is at stake.

The Swedish Presidency in search of European cohesion

If we consider the typology of different possible roles played by a presidency of the Union (broker/agenda-setter/representative), we might estimate, at this point, that the present Presidency has given itself more the role of a broker who would keep a good balance between national diverse interests. This role has certainly been reinforced by the will of the Swedish government to demonstrate that Swedes are really feeling part of Europe and thinking of their future as intrinsically linked to the EU's future.

If no new strong international crisis happens during the coming month (comparable with the Georgian crisis or the Gaza crisis), the decisive moment to evaluate the representative capacity of the Swedish Presidency will definitely be the Copenhagen negotiation. The adoption of a plan for strengthening EU action in Afghanistan and Pakistan is however a good step considering the deterioration of the situation in the region. The Swedish Presidency will probably also continue to focus on the issue of EU enlargement (Croatian accession) and on the Eastern Partnership implementation rather than on strong new initiatives on the Iran nuclear issue or other international issues.

Simultaneously the Swedish presidency has done well in setting agendas on institutional issues and, for obvious reasons, the Baltic Sea Strategy, which was strongly supported by the Swedish Government. The focus on the main priorities (Copenhagen/institutions) has however left relatively unattended the preparation of a post-Lisbon strategy, expected for the Spring Summit of 2010 and presented as a priority of the Presidency's programme. The Swedish Presidency seems to pay more attention to issues such as financial regulation (implementation of the Larosière report) or sketching an agenda to climb out of national public deficit than to the debate regarding a new strategy for sustainable growth, although many public statements were made regarding employment issues. Having decided not to question the Member States' prevailing choice to favour national solutions to solve the economic crisis, the Swedish Presidency might have underestimated the need for a strong start to a more coherent and coordinated European approach to sustainable growth. The divergences in macro-economic national programmes remain somewhat unchallenged.

In addition, the contradictory announcements made by the Swedish Presidency about the possible establishment of a European carbon tax have been a source of confusion for other Member States. Considering the experience of Sweden in this field, it could have taken the responsibility to engage in a constructive and well-informed debate on the impact of a European carbon tax.

After all, it is possible that the Swedish Presidency is best characterized by its role as a "broker". This is quite obvious in the negotiations on climate, but it is also noticeable regarding the negotiations of apparently less urgent yet key issues like the establishment of the European Systemic Risk Board or the definition of the European External Action Service mandate, which could have a decisive role to play in the elaboration of a foreign policy common doctrine.

Similar efforts are being made regarding immigration (the Stockholm Programme), but the lack of political will, including at the level of the new European Parliament, will make it more difficult to achieve any meaningful results in this respect. Efforts have been concentrated on the balance between security and the protection of civil rights (translation and interpretation rights in criminal proceedings). From a French perspective, there is one issue where the Swedish Presidency is not perceived as acting as an "honest broker" and that is the accession of Turkey. Minister Bildt's declarations on this issue have been considered in clear contradiction with the French Government's position.

The Swedish Presidency in the trio

Since the spring of 2008 and the elaboration of the common programme, the Swedish government is considered to have maintained a constructive attitude. When its turn came to hold the presidency of the Union, the Swedish Government made less criticism of the Czech Presidency than the French Government: the French expected a stronger follow-up on what they had initiated and the Swedish Government was certainly cautious about the outcomes of its own challenging presidency. However, being the last one of the trio to hold the presidency did not allow the Swedish government to have a leading role. Despite the benefits of good Trio-coordination regarding the continuity of work and the establishment of coherent European strategies, one might consider that this trio lacked real coordination and mutual support.

One big topic for the Presidency's success

Attention is now focused on the choice of the personalities of Herman Van Rompuy as the first permanent President of the Council and Catherine Ashton as High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy. This breaking news has not been received as a sign of political impulse at the EU level and the fact that a choice was made "in time" will not make up for the disappointment of a decision that led to appointing two personalities apparently lacking in international experience. For the time being, the Swedish Presidency is made responsible for the result of this intense negotiation between Member States; but at the end of the day it is the ability of Herman Van Rompuy and Catherine Ashton to maintain a balance between the main EU institutions and to remain truthful to the Community method that will decide on the merits of the Swedish Presidency.

The big challenge is nevertheless the Copenhagen summit negotiation. At this stage, it is still hard to determine what a satisfactory conclusion might be. One could argue that the EU needs to obtain as much visibility as possible on risks of international environmental dumping from countries that would not engage clearly in a constraint agreement. Expectations are high regarding the United States' final position but any binding agreement from the US would certainly put into perspective the lack of visibility on China's position (presently the main carbon emission producer). The Copenhagen agreement will certainly be decisive in shaping the strategies of Member States to reach the so called "3×20 for 2020" targets. However, it is also a test for European leadership in international negotiations.

NEXT ONE IN THE RELAY: A VIEW OF THE SWEDISH EU PRESIDENCY FROM PRAGUE

David Král

This paper deals with the perceptions of the Swedish Presidency in the Czech Republic. It analyses these perceptions mainly from an expert perspective, as the political assessment is hard to make, given the weak apolitical government in Prague and general apathy towards European issues on the part of most of the relevant political actors. The paper argues that Swedes, as generally viewed from Prague, have fared very well on many fronts including the Lisbon Treaty ratification (where, moreover, the Czechs were the main actors), the October summit deal on financing the climate change, some smaller issues important to the Czechs such as the Western Balkans, and their handling of the economic crisis. The ‘top jobs’ summit resulting in the appointment of the European Council President and the EU High Representative did not evoke particularly strong reactions in political circles in Prague, underlining the fact that the current Czech government did not have strong stakes in the process and was generally happy with an agreement equalling the lowest common denominator among the member states. Thus the biggest challenge ahead of the Swedish EU Presidency is how they will manage to handle the EU representation at the Copenhagen summit on climate change in December 2009.

Introduction

Closer alignment with Stockholm than with Paris

Since its inception, the Swedish Presidency has had a ‘special’ relationship with the Czech Republic. The foremost reason is the fact that Stockholm took over the EU relay from Prague. The two countries were part of the same Presidency trio, experiencing strong co-ordination during the preparatory phase of the Presidency, including drafting of a joint programme, as well as during its execution.

During the preparatory phase of the Presidency, the Czech administration always felt a stronger alignment with Sweden than with its predecessor, France. In terms of priorities, the work of both Presidencies was determined primarily by the context of the economic crisis, which to a large extent limited their room for manoeuvre in other areas. The liberal centre-right constellation of both the Czech and Swedish governments made it easier to share the vision of the importance of preserving the benefits of an internal market and ruling out calls for new protectionism. In terms of external relations, support for EU enlargement (including Turkey, in strong

opposition to France¹) and focus on the Eastern rather than Southern dimension of the neighbourhood policy sparked hopes of continuity in the course of 2009 in those areas. In contrast, some divergence could be seen between the two countries with respect to the energy and climate agenda. Whereas the Czech Presidency was focusing more on energy security viewed through the prism of security of energy supplies and devoted all its diplomatic activity to that end, the Swedish focus has mainly been on ensuring a successful outcome of the Copenhagen global summit on climate change and a strong mandate for the EU.

Whereas the Czech Presidency was exposed to a strong and enduring critique from France, both from politicians and media, which in the view of Czech policymakers and media was often non-substantiated or overdone, no such explicit criticism was ever voiced from Sweden. Indeed, the Czechs often felt that France was working against them rather than with them, which contrasted with the co-operation enjoyed with their Swedish partners. When doubts prevailed within the EU whether the Czechs, given their weak caretaker government without political mandate, would be able to steer the key June 2009 summit, Stockholm ruled out any calls for an extraordinary summit to be convened at an early stage of the Swedish Presidency and reiterated full confidence in the Czech capacity to manage the June summit.

The Swedes have drawn on some of the lessons from the Czech Presidency. One is that in the context of a very serious global economic crisis, as well as other crises that could emerge, it is worthwhile – especially for smaller countries like both Sweden and the Czech Republic – prioritising more cautiously (despite working programme being rather ambitious), focusing only on those areas where the presidency can tangibly deliver, and creating an efficient crisis-response mechanism helping to deal quickly with unexpected situations. The result-oriented approach of the Swedish Presidency was articulated *inter alia* in Cecilia Malmström's remark in relation to the Slovenian-Croatian border dispute: 'We will not convene summits just for the sake of themselves, without having substance',² clearly in reaction to the hyperactivity of the French Presidency which often focused more on visibility than on delivery.

¹ The explicit Swedish support for acceleration of the accession negotiations with Turkey was allegedly one of the reasons for the cancellation of Sarkozy's visit to Sweden shortly ahead of its assumption of Presidency.

² 'Svédové, noví šéfové EU, se od Česka poučili' ('Swedes, the new EU bosses, took lessons from the Czechs'), article on iDnes news server, 30 June 2009, retrieved from: http://zpravy.idnes.cz/svedove-novi-sefove-eu-se-od-ceska-poucili-fgh-/zahranicni.asp?c=A090630_130645_zahranicni_ipl.

The intensity of coverage and references to the Swedish Presidency in the Czech media is naturally not as extensive as during the Czech Presidency itself, but is nevertheless still fairly comprehensive compared with previous Presidencies. One would expect a kind of ‘Presidency hangover’ of most of the mainstream media after half a year of extremely intensive coverage of European issues. The main explanation lies in the fact that the Czechs became the main actors in the Lisbon Treaty ratification saga just after the second Irish vote, putting a major unknown variable on the Swedish Presidency’s table. On the other hand, the references by policymakers to the Swedish Presidency are rather rare, except for the issue of ratification, which is explicable mainly on account of the enduring domestic turmoil which has placed the European issues secondary to the interest of the political representatives.

Assessment of the Presidency’s performance

Lisbon Treaty – Czech Republic as the bad kid on the block

The greatest expectation of the Swedish Presidency from Prague’s perspective thus far has been how it would tackle President Klaus’s demand in relation to his signature of the Lisbon Treaty. After the successful outcome of the Irish referendum, which was a cause of concern for the Presidency as well as most heads of government, attention refocused on the Czech Republic. Apart from the pending case in front of the Constitutional Court, lodged by a group of Civic Democratic Party (ODS) senators and asking to review the Treaty in terms of its compliance with the Czech Constitution, President Klaus started to make additional demands.

These were linked mainly to the possible effect of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights on the claims of Sudeten Germans, removed from Czechoslovakia after WWII on basis of the so-called Beneš Decrees. First, Klaus was not at all clear about what he sought, which made the Presidency’s position even more difficult. He mentioned a ‘footnote’ regarding the non-applicability of the Charter to Beneš decrees in the Treaty. This would, however, imply a re-opening of the ratification procedure in all the other Member States, including Ireland, which was not realistic. Prime Minister Reinfeldt immediately engaged in intensive negotiation with President Klaus, as well as with the Czech government, in search of a solution. Despite the diverging interests of different actors, the Swedish Presidency showed its leadership capacity and negotiating skills. In spite of attempts by many EU governments and institutions (e.g. the European Parliament) to exert strong pressure on President Klaus to promise to sign the Treaty, Sweden understood that Klaus was in no position to be pushed around as he could not in any case sign before the

Constitutional Court's ruling was issued. Instead, the Presidency engaged in negotiations with both Klaus and the Czech government about the conditions under which he would sign and what guarantees could be given by the EU if his demands were met.

The negotiation was difficult and was threatening to open a Pandora's box ahead of the October summit. Just a few days before the October European Council, the Slovakian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Lajčák and the PM Fico threatened that if Slovakia did not get the same safeguards regarding the Beneš Decrees as the Czech Republic they would block the deal on the Czech exception. On the other hand, Austria and Hungary were suggesting – just one day ahead of the summit – that any mention of the Beneš decrees in relation to a deal with the Czech Republic would result in a veto on their part.

The solution finally brokered by the Swedish Presidency was able to satisfy all parties concerned. It granted an *en bloc* exception from the application of the Charter for the Czech Republic, similarly to the case of the UK and Poland, to be ratified with the nearest amendment of the founding treaties, i.e. probably with the accession treaty of Croatia or Iceland. At the same time, it tackled the concerns of Slovakia, which was not seeking such a block exemption from the Charter, along with the EU declaration dismantling any links between the application of the Charter and possible claims based on the Beneš decrees. Finally, absence of an explicit mention of the Beneš decrees in the text of the Czech opt-out eliminated the concerns of Hungary, Austria and, partially, Germany.

Although the Czech political representatives are not necessarily happy about the outcome of the summit, as many were not seeking such an exception from Charter, this is without prejudice to the role that the Swedish Presidency has played in the process. Its attempt to facilitate the earliest possible entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty is viewed as perfectly legitimate. Even according to those politicians who are not in favour of the Czech Republic opt-out from the Charter, such as the chairman of the Green Party, Ondřej Liška, this is not the fault of the Swedish Presidency but of the Czech politicians, who were unable to prevent President Klaus from putting additional demands on the table through domestic means and processes.

Financing the climate change agreement

– satisfaction in Prague but less ambitious outcome overall

The main issue on the table for the October summit, originally somewhat overshadowed by the crisis management of the Czech opt-out, was how

much the EU was willing to pay to the less developed countries to make them commit to drastic cuts in greenhouse emissions and ensure a successful outcome of the Copenhagen summit. The Swedish Presidency failed to hammer out a specific decision on the division of Member States' contributions. The Czech Republic was among a group of nine countries opposed to the mechanism suggested by the Presidency of determining the contributions on the basis of GDP, arguing that private consumption should also be taken into account, making countries with higher domestic consumption bear a higher cost. From this perspective, the Czech representatives and particularly the Ministry of Trade and Industry can probably feel happy that Sweden brokered a deal which takes into consideration the position of less prosperous Member States. The lack of a clear EU position ahead of the Copenhagen summit, however, weakens the EU position as a whole, despite the opposing claims of the Swedish Presidency. The summit conclusions also fail to acknowledge the overall cost that the EU is willing to pay to developing countries, making reference only to the Commission's estimate of 100 billion. Although there is arguably time to agree on a precise burden-sharing mechanism ahead of the summit through a working group established by the European Council, it remains very doubtful whether the working group will be able to come up with proposals before Copenhagen.

Issue of Canadian visas for the Czechs – one for all, all for one

One issue that came to the table soon after the Swedish Presidency had taken up office was the introduction of visas for the Czech citizens by Canada in July 2009, which was implemented after a series of warnings from Canada owing to an increasing number of asylum applications by Czech citizens of Roma origin.³ The Czech Republic could not retaliate with a reciprocal introduction of visas for Canadian citizens because such a measure has to be decided at the EU level. The Swedish Presidency reacted very quickly, with the Swedish immigration minister Tobias Billström supporting the idea of reciprocity, i.e. the EU introducing visas for Canada. This step by the Swedish Presidency was warmly welcomed in Prague, although it was more symbolic than substantive. The proposal for introduction of the visas had to be tabled by the Commission, who made it very clear that it would need to examine the whole case, and the policy-makers in Prague did not realistically expect that the Member States would

³ This situation has already happened once before: in 1997 Canada re-introduced visas for the Czech Republic after a year of a visa-free regime precisely on the same grounds.

endorse moving Canada onto the black visa list.⁴ Still, the solidarity that the Swedish Presidency showed with the Czechs left yet another positive impression in Prague.

Other issues – External Action Service, economic crisis, Western Balkans and top jobs

From Prague's perspective, the progress made under the Swedish Presidency in other policy areas has also left a positive impression. The Swedish Presidency has moved forward substantially with the preparation of the future functioning of the European External Action Service (EEAS), with a ten-page working document tabled to the European Council in October 2009. The development of the document was in practice blocked since the Slovenian EU Presidency, in order not to exert negative influence on the domestic debate in Ireland prior to the second Lisbon referendum. The Swedish paper meets the Czech expectations in most respects, especially the autonomy of the Member States' diplomacies in trade issues. On the other hand, the Czechs were favouring the inclusion of a higher proportion of national diplomats in the future service (up to half), whereas the Swedish proposal reckons on only one-third coming from Member States and the remaining two-thirds from the EU institutions (Commission and Council Secretariat).

Regarding the Western Balkans, one of the declared priorities of the Czech EU Presidency, it seems that Prague can generally be happy with what the Swedes have achieved. There was some hesitation regarding Carl Bildt's refusal to get involved in the settlement of the Slovenian-Croatian dispute with the aim to unblock negotiations with Croatia. Mr Bildt saw this dispute as purely bilateral matter. Paradoxically, the unblocking of negotiations finally materialised despite the lack of Swedish mediation and the Presidency managed to make impressive progress in accession negotiations whereby six further negotiating chapters were opened. The Czech administration believes that under the Swedish Presidency the EU will also agree to the lifting of visas for Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, for which the Czech Presidency has been pressing hard. Similarly, there are hopes in Prague that, owing to the recommendation of the Commission, the Council can open accession negotiations with Macedonia. The strong personal involvement of Carl Bildt in Bosnia, where he presided over the

⁴ In October the Commission proposed and the JHA Council endorsed the introduction of EU visas for Canadian diplomats unless Canada opens a consular office at its embassy in Prague and draws a roadmap leading to restoration of the visa-free regime with the Czech Republic.

talks involving the two entities on the constitutional changes that are necessary to enable Bosnia to move forward with visa liberalisation and towards a candidate status, are also viewed as a very important step in keeping Bosnia on the EU track.

As far as the Swedish Presidency's performance in tackling the economic crisis goes, the Czech expectations are not very high. This is not because of lack of confidence in Sweden as an efficient negotiator at EU level, but is rather owed to Czech scepticism that the EU could actually do much in this respect. The Czechs have seen Sweden – as already mentioned – as defender of the principles of the single market and fighting any resorting to protectionism. Drawing on their own experience, the Czechs relied on Sweden mainly in terms of drawing up a common EU stance for the G20 summit in Pittsburgh, which is viewed as a guarantee that not only the big member states will be heard. This finally did happen during an extraordinary EU summit on 17 September, when the EU leaders agreed on the need to push for the capping of bank bonuses and compensation for bank executives. Similarly, the Czech government welcomed the Presidency's call on the member states to formulate exit strategies for phasing out massive state interventions in the economies during the crisis.

Regarding the 'top jobs' summit, which took place in Brussels on 19 November 2009 and resulted in the appointment of Herman Van Rompuy as the first ever permanent President of the European Council and Catherine Ashton as the EU High Representative, the Czech delegation did not go to Brussels with very high stakes. The negotiating position of the Czech Republic was considerably weakened by its lack of credibility following the Lisbon Treaty ratification, so the Czech Prime Minister Fischer did not aspire to any high-level game in this respect. For the permanent President, the Czechs rather preferred a personality able to broker consensus among different groups of member states – small and big, new and old, rich and poor, and among different groupings thereof. It does not appear that the Czech Republic adopted a strong position on the precise job description of the new posts or any particular preference for names, as long as the appointee was able to fulfil the honest broker role. From this perspective, Van Rompuy seems to be a good choice for the Czechs, and this was admitted by PM Fischer.⁵ Similarly, the Prime Minister was happy about

⁵ 'Prvním „prezidentem“ EU bude Belgičan, šéfdiplomatkou Britka. Dobrá volba, řekl Fischer' ('The first EU "president" will be a Belgian, a chief diplomat a Brit. Good choice, Fischer said'). Article in iHned daily news server, 19 November 2009, retrieved from: <http://zahranicni.ihned.cz/c1-39133490-prvnim-prezidentem-eu-bude-belgican-sefdiplomatkou-britka-dobra-volba-rekl-fischer>.

the appointment of Catherine Ashton to head up emerging EU diplomacy. There was apparently good co-operation with her as trade commissioner during the Czech EU Presidency, when she helped to conclude a free-trade agreement with Canada, and generally the PM believes she has a good relationship with Central and Eastern Europe. A more cautious approach was articulated by the former Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg, who sees Ashton as a logical choice for a large Member State representative, but underlines that the new job will be extremely challenging and different from what she has been doing until now.⁶ One particular point relating to the position of the current Czech PM is that he does not see the alleged lack of experience and visibility of the two candidates necessarily as a handicap: he himself was in a similar position when he was appointed as head of the caretaker government during the Czech EU presidency, yet he managed to assert himself in this post even vis-à-vis the political parties' leaders who originally assumed he would simply be an executor of their agreements. The assessment of the new top jobs, however, hardly ever commented on the role of the Swedish Presidency in the process. Although some of the member states might have expected Sweden to conduct the process more transparently and focus primarily on the definition of the qualities that the candidates should fulfil, there is not much to indicate that this was the Czech government's key consideration.

Conclusion

The overall impression of the Swedish Presidency from Prague's perspective is positive. Having gone through the same experience very recently, the Czech political representatives realise how difficult it is for a small country to steer the European Union at a time of deep economic crisis when the presidency has to mediate between many different actors with often opposing views. Hopes have been expressed that Sweden will, despite the unpopular Czech example, demonstrate once again that even small countries are able to run good presidencies, a point which was often disputed during the Czech tenure.

Despite a relatively ambitious set of priorities, Sweden has managed to prioritise and deliver on the burning issues, including the economic crisis management, ensuring comprehensive representation in Copenhagen and bringing the Lisbon Treaty into force, which is in line with the Czech lessons learnt during their own EU Presidency.

⁶ Ibid.

Being aware of the limited role that the Presidency can play as an agenda setter, the Swedish Presidency probably fared best as honest broker. Its handling of the delicate situation surrounding Václav Klaus's additional demands in relation to the Lisbon Treaty was masterly, without bullying the Czech government or Klaus and still bringing desired results from the EU perspective (although not necessarily from the Czech point of view). Similarly, the Czechs were very happy that the Swedish Presidency did not bully the poorer EU members over the issue of financing the climate change costs, despite the fact that the result as a whole weakens the European position ahead of the Copenhagen negotiations. The negotiation of the new 'top jobs' according to the Lisbon Treaty marked general Czech satisfaction with the names agreed and the speed with which the compromise was found, further reinforced by the fact that the Czech delegation went to the summit with a very low-profile negotiating position. The biggest challenge left for the Swedish Presidency is representing the EU at the Copenhagen summit, arguably the main flagship of the Presidency. Success does not necessarily mean that there has to be a global deal – many experts think that the perspectives look bleak – but at least the EU under Swedish leadership has to show that it knows what it brings to the table, must be ready to stand behind its commitments and get at least some of the crucial actors on board.

MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE SWEDISH PRESIDENCY: A VIEW FROM SPAIN

Ignacio Molina

The general perception of the Swedish Presidency in Spain

The dominant general perception about the ongoing EU Presidency is visibly influenced by the fact that Spain will assume that responsibility on 1 January 2010.¹ Thus, many political problems and policy issues which are in progress will continue to be high on the agenda during the next six months.² The Spanish officials who are now finishing preparing the work programme for the forthcoming Presidency are indeed scrutinising the achievements and failures of Swedes, since these will strongly affect their own agenda. For example, the successful end to the tortuous ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and the appointment of the new EU ‘top jobs’ will allow Spain to concentrate on the implementation of the institutional provisions without having to deal with an impasse scenario or, even worse, failure in terms of constitutional reform. Also, as another illustration of substantial policies, without an agreement on a new programme in the area of justice and home affairs, it will be impossible for Spain to approve during the first half of 2010 the envisaged Action Plan to turn the Stockholm programme into specific measures.

In connection with the forthcoming Spanish Presidency, we should note as well the somewhat widespread opinion in Madrid – certainly in the months

¹ Considering the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December, however, and the appointment of a permanent President of the European Council, Spain will only perform the office regarding the EU Council of Ministers. This will affect the political visibility of the Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero but, as it is going to be the first semester under the reformed Lisbon rules with the new appointments, the Spanish leader may also take advantage of circumstances to shape the role of prime ministers in the future EU. Furthermore, several international summits between the EU and different world regions (the US, Latin America, the Mediterranean, etc.) will be held in Spain and PM Zapatero has been guaranteed an important role as host.

² It is interesting to note that, although the launch of the Team Presidencies tried to improve the coordination of EU Council management in three consecutive semesters, little attention has been paid to the similar need for harmonising agendas between different Trios or, at least, between the last Presidency of a finishing Trio - such as Sweden, in the French-Czech-Swedish 2008/09 Team - and the first one of the forthcoming Trio - such as Spain in the Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian 2010/11 Team. Nevertheless, some bilateral contacts between representatives of the Swedish and Spanish governments at senior or junior levels have been produced during the last months to try to ensure a smooth transition between presidencies. PM Zapatero visited his Swedish colleague Fredrik Reinfeldt in Stockholm on 31 August last for that purpose. Of course, several hundred other meetings have been arranged on a multilateral basis.

before 1 July 2009 – that not too much should be expected of the Swedish semester. This is linked to the idea that Europe would require a much stronger leadership to face the significant economic and institutional uncertainties which have hindered EU integration process during this year. In this conventional perspective, neither the Czech Republic, a small, new, Euro-sceptic and non-Euro member state, nor Sweden, merely a more tolerable Nordic version of the same, would be the right Member State to perform the task.³ An adaptation of the previous viewpoint, but more inclined towards the belief that only large EU member states are able to run the role of the Presidency effectively, points to the fact that between the first half of 2008 (France) and the second half of 2011 (Poland), the Spanish Presidency will be the *only* one capable of handling the big challenges of the integration process in a multi-polar world of powers such as the US, China, Russia or Brazil.

When the evaluation does not refer to simplified generalisations but to the actual priorities and the institutional or policy outputs that have been delivered in the last weeks, however, then the vision is much less impressionistic and becomes quite positive about Swedish accomplishments. Although it may be because of the undemanding expectations or in comparison with the preceding Czech semester, the truth is that both officials and media coincide in praising the coherent job done so far, including the good preparation of the Presidency from an organisational point of view. Nevertheless, some of them add that the achievements, which they acknowledge, may be explained by the unchallenging priorities included in the work programme. In any case, it is also true that the dominant assessment is rather ‘neutral’ in the best sense of the concept, the role of honest broker being the one which best characterises the Swedish Presidency.

The Swedish priorities on the eve of the Spanish Presidency

With the exception perhaps of the promotion of the Baltic Sea Strategy, all the main priorities of the Swedish rotating Presidency (the Lisbon Treaty,

³ See, for example, the article by Carlos Carnero: “Un músculo europeo sin esteroides”, *El País*, 1 Dec. 2008, available at [40](http://www.elpais.com/articulo/opinion/musculo/europeo/esteroides/elpepiopi/20081201elpepiopi_5/Tes Carnero, who is the Spanish member of the Presidency of the Party of European Socialists, foresaw the Swedish Presidency as an ‘unwilling’ one in a very problematical year in which Europeans risked becoming depressed.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

the economic crisis, climate change and Justice and Home Affairs)⁴ have not really been chosen but are the result of the context and momentum of the EU integration process. Thus, the judgement about their appropriateness is necessarily positive. The management of the two crises that the EU is facing - economic and institutional - has become an unavoidable key concern for all Presidencies since the summer of 2008. The negotiation of an ambitious climate agreement was a marked priority considering that the UN had decided that the fifteenth annual conference of the parties who signed the Convention on Climate Change (COP 15 to be held in Copenhagen from 7 to 18 December) had to establish a new global agreement for the period from 2012 when the Kyoto Protocol expires. Finally, in the area of freedom, security and justice, the five-year period of the agenda known as the Hague Programme (2004-2009) is about to expire.

Institutional affairs: the ratification of the Treaty and the appointment of Van Rompuy and Ashton

With regard to institutional affairs, and starting with the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty, most Spanish politicians and observers perceive that Sweden has been both lucky (since Germany ratified in September after introducing some legal reforms required by the Federal Constitutional Court, the Irish voted yes in a second referendum in October and, subsequently, the Polish President signed the Treaty) and quite clever in dealing with Václav Klaus' last show of reluctance to sign the ratification of the twenty-seventh Member State. Instead of rejecting as intolerable the pretensions of the Czech President, the Swedish PM Fredrik Reinfeldt was very pragmatic in getting the desired outcome; that is to say, the treaty came into force before the end of 2009. Thanks to his proposal to give the Czech Republic legal exemption from the Charter of Fundamental Rights the next time the

⁴ See Langdal, Fredrik and Göran von Sydow (2009), *The 2009 Swedish EU Presidency: The Setting, Priorities and Roles*. Stockholm: SIEPS, EPA 2009:7.

The Spanish think-tank 'Real Instituto Elcano' also published in September 2009 an analysis of the Swedish Presidency by Fredrik Langdal (*The Priorities of the Swedish EU Presidency*. Madrid: Elcano Royal Institute, ARI 133/2009), that was then translated into Spanish (as 'Las Prioridades de la Presidencia Sueca', available at www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/riecano/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/europa/ari133-2009). Both English and Spanish versions of the text had been visited more than 750 times in late November 2009 by the Elcano Institute's website users, who are predominantly Spanish. Furthermore, although security and defence issues were not included in the main Swedish priorities, the Elcano Institute also published an analysis of the Presidency ambitions regarding ESDP: Anna Sundberg and Claes Nilsson (2009), *Swedish Presidency Ambitions and ESDP*. Madrid: Elcano Royal Institute, ARI 156/2009, available at: www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/riecano_eng/Content?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/Elcano_in/Zonas_in/ARI156-2009.

EU's treaties are revised – probably when Croatia or Iceland joins the EU, which is expected to be in 2011 or 2012 – President Klaus finally signed, explicitly welcoming and thanking the Swedish ‘guarantee’ that ‘corresponded to what the President had envisioned’.

It is open to question whether the Swedish Presidency has played an agenda-setting role, since many other Member States would have probably had many more doubts about giving consent to Klaus's demands; at the end of the day, rather symbolic ones. The approval of the deal on the Czech Republic's opt-out at the European Council held 29 to 30 October, combined with the decision of the Czech constitutional court that the document was compatible with the Czech constitution, paved the way for an end to the endless institutional reform process. As the Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt stressed in the European Parliament last July, ‘with the Lisbon Treaty in place, we can close the chapter on an inward-looking phase in the EU's cooperation. The time has come for the EU to look outwards and into future’.⁵

Once the entry into force of the Treaty was guaranteed, the Swedish Presidency was able to open formal consultations on the appointment of the permanent President of the European Council and the High Representative for the CFSP with regard to internal territorial, ideological, gender and size balances. Fredrik Reinfeldt undertook some weeks of intense and inclusive negotiations, resisting the idea of a deal essentially decided by the French-German couple but also rejecting the unrealistic suggestion coming from some other states - mainly Poland but also Finland - to choose from different official aspirants who would have to present their candidatures before the EU leaders. As happened in other countries, some criticism of the Swedish Presidency was expressed in the Spanish newspapers about the lack of transparency and the uncertainties in the complex process.⁶ Many names were unofficially put forward for the post of President of the European Council, including the former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe González, and for High Representative, including the current Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos, but the Spanish leader Zapatero mainly focused on reaching an agreement that, rather than filling one of the two posts with a Spaniard, would satisfy his preference

⁵ Reinfeldt, Fredrik (2009), Address to the European Parliament, 14 July 2009 (available at: www.se2009.eu).

⁶ See, for example, the article published by the newspaper *El País* on 17 November 2008, ‘El caos se apodera del proceso de elección del presidente de la UE’ (‘Chaos in the appointment of EU President’), available at www.elpais.com/articulo/internacional/caos/apodera/proceso/eleccion/presidente/UE/elpepuin/20091117elpepiint_7/Tes.

for introducing gender equilibrium and having a Socialist as the EU's foreign policy chief. As Prime Minister of one of the few big EU countries with a leftist government, in which gender balance is respected, he played an important role in helping the Swedish Presidency to forge consensus among the 27, even if the Treaty allowed a decision to be made by a qualified majority vote.

In the end, the European Council unanimously and rapidly agreed on the names proposed by Sweden for the two top positions in the extraordinary summit held on 19 November 2009: the Belgian prime minister, Herman Van Rompuy - a male Christian Democrat from a small country in the heart of the continent - as permanent President of the European Council, and the British Commissioner Catherine Ashton - a female socialist from a big but non-central member state - as High Representative for the EU's foreign policy. Again, as happened elsewhere in Europe, Spanish public opinion showed its disappointment at the low profile of both politicians. From a more procedural perspective, however, the honest broker role for the Swedes - including the campaign of the Swedish Minister for Europe Cecilia Malmström to appoint a woman and the rejection of Foreign Minister Carl Bildt of a hypothetical candidature for High Representative - was recognised. An agreement that respected the various internal balances was reached and, thus, full success on institutional matters was achieved on 1 December 2009: the Treaty of Lisbon was in force, the two top jobs were already appointed and the President of the Commission José Manuel Barroso - who had been waiting until the High Representative and first Vice-President of the Commission were decided - was able to announce the other 25 Commissioners.

The economic crisis and the shaping of the Post-Lisbon 2020 Strategy

From the perspective of the transition from the Swedish to the Spanish semester, the attention of the current Presidency on the economy and employment deserves at least three remarks. First of all, regarding the linkage between national public finances and the stimulus plans amid the economic crisis, one must mention the weaker position of Spain vis-à-vis Sweden, which is one of the seven EU member states without excessive deficit according to the Growth and Stability Pact,⁷ and thus it has the

⁷ The other six countries are Finland, Denmark, Estonia, Bulgaria, Luxembourg and Cyprus. The Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, the Spaniard Joaquín Almunia, has recently forecast that the Spanish deficit will rise to 11% by the end of 2009 and to 10% in 2010. Whereas most EU members have planned to swell budget deficits by 2012 at the latest, Spain has been granted until 2013 to be under the 3% threshold.

moral authority to defend it. For Swedish Finance Minister Anders Borg, ‘without doubt, public finances are on an unsustainable course’ whereas his Spanish colleague Elena Salgado, while acknowledging that ‘restoring the budgetary equilibrium will be the priority for the time to come’, also defends the view that economic stimulus remains necessary to nurture recovery and tackle unemployment.⁸ Thus, it is not expected that the Spanish Presidency will practise such high-profile activism as Sweden as regards the need for restrictive budgets and fighting public debt. In the same way, when the Swedish Presidency – and the Commission – suggested reconsidering bailouts to banks, Spain declared its agreement with the idea in the medium and long term but aligned with the majority of EU Member States who believed such a decision would be premature.

Second, with regard to the regulation of the financial markets, it is much easier, provided there are no particular problems, to maintain a similar line or, even more ambitiously, as Spain belongs to the Euro-zone and its banking system is considered solid, to accept EU supervision additional to the national one (Banco de España) which is already efficient. In fact, Spain has supported Swedish proposals on European macro- and micro-financial supervision for banks, insurance companies and stock markets.

Finally, concerning the new agenda that has to replace the Lisbon Strategy which will probably be launched during the first half of 2010, the cooperation between the two semesters seems really significant for Spain, given that the success of the Spanish Presidency (and, actually, the Trio Spain-Belgium-Hungary) depends on how this new post-Lisbon 2020 Strategy is drafted, probably at the March 2010 European Council. The Swedes are trying to shape its contents at the December 2009 European Council, linking the ‘short-term crisis management to the long-term strategy building’ and in this respect ‘Sweden has given a push to the super-planning in a good direction by putting the twin tasks of the social dimension and the new community policies into the fore’ (see Ágh, this volume). The Swedish focus on research and innovation fits well with the Spanish interest in changing its ‘productive model’ and avoiding bursting construction bubbles that so amplified the extent of the crisis during 2008 and 2009. Too strong a Swedish emphasis on the need for better adjustment in the EU’s labour market reform may, however, be problematic for Madrid,

⁸ The unemployment rate in Spain, according to the national government itself, was at 17.9% in the third quarter of 2009, the second highest in the EU after Latvia. More than four million Spaniards are expected to be jobless by January 2010. The unemployment estimate for Sweden in 2010 is around 11%.

given the domestic politicisation of the topic among Spanish unions that are intensely opposed to initiatives to reform the labour market.

Substantial policies: the Climate Agreement, the Stockholm Programme and the Baltic Sea Strategy

The Copenhagen UN conference on climate change is probably the biggest challenge facing the Swedish Presidency. This is not only a result of the pressing global climate issue as such, but also arises because the eventual Copenhagen agreements on greenhouse gas emission reductions have to be distributed both within the EU and among the EU and other world regions developed or not. It was in Spain, during the Barcelona Climate Change Talks, that a first attempt to draw up a text for a possible agreement failed. The world leaders now have the responsibility to end negotiations and the Swedish Presidency the burden not only of defining the standard EU position but also of pressing China and the US for much more ambitious plans, something which at this moment seems far from easy. The draft work programme for the Spanish Presidency stresses that the content of the following semester on energy and climate change - which, in principle, consists in implementing the agreement - depends absolutely on the result of the conference. It is even possible that a new summit may be needed if world leaders in Copenhagen only agree on the general political objective of curbing emissions and, thus, legally binding decisions have to be reached in further negotiations.⁹

It should be much easier to achieve an internal consensus in the EU regarding the Stockholm Programme (post-Hague) covering the areas of justice, freedom and security. Spain is following the final negotiation of the text carefully, and it is expected to be approved in December, since an Action Plan for implementing the Programme has to be agreed during the Spanish semester. Both countries belong to different traditions regarding justice and home affairs and their priorities differ; whereas Sweden is more interested in promoting a common asylum system among the Member States, Spain is worried about the external management of the EU border and how to cope with the massive arrival of migrants. Spanish officials, however, have declared themselves quite satisfied with the final contents of the Programme, including the problem of unaccompanied migrant

⁹ In contrast with Sweden, Spain cannot be an example for the EU concerning the reduction of emissions. If we assume 1990 as the year of reference, Spain is actually the industrialised country with the worst results in implementing Kyoto Protocol compromises to fight against global warming. The deceleration of industrial and transport activity because of the crisis and a sincere governmental bid for renewable energies are, however, starting to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

minors, the fight against gender violence, the need for an EU internal security strategy, the creation of an Erasmus programme for police officers and strengthened collaboration with third countries in controlling illegal migration.

Finally, the Baltic Sea Strategy is an issue that the Swedish government has chosen to highlight in the Work Programme, as the French did with the Mediterranean region, the Czechs with the Eastern Partnership¹⁰ and the Spaniards want to do regarding transatlantic cooperation, including both north and south shores of the Atlantic Ocean in America. The impact of this policy in Spain, however, is almost non-existent among the public and elites.

EU relations with its vicinity and the wider world during the Swedish semester

Regardless of the fact that the EU's regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea may deserve little attention in some Member States, such as Spain, it is undeniable that the ambition of the Swedish government to develop a Baltic Sea Strategy can be recognised as one of the main prioritised issues of the Presidency. It is however more difficult to consider as a different and individualised objective of the semester the attention paid to the 'Neighbourhood and the World', which is included in the Work Programme as the sixth explicit priority of the Presidency.¹¹ Obviously, this is not a really independent initiative but rather a heterogeneous category comprising the follow-up of enlargement negotiations, the neighbourhood policy and the external dimension of all policy areas in which the EU intervenes, including both focal points (for example, the summit with the USA and the WTO Doha Round negotiations) and more peripheral issues (for example, trade relations with South Korea and the management of political turbulences in Central America).

It must be said, first of all, that Sweden has not suffered unexpected events that may have obliged it to provide leadership in the external relations of the EU. Nevertheless, the Swedish PM Reinfeldt and the experienced Foreign Minister Carl Bildt have been active in the most unstable regions of the world. This involvement in international hot areas has to do, basically, with the aftermath of the elections held in Iran and Afghanistan but also

¹⁰ Notwithstanding the Czech promotion of the Eastern Partnership, the initiative of this privileged policy towards the European neighbours was also Sweden's, along with Poland.

¹¹ See Swedish Government (2009), Work Programme for the Swedish Presidency of the EU, available at: www.se2009.eu/en/the_presidency/work_programme.

with a controversial stance on the role of the EU in the Middle East conflict, including support for the division of Jerusalem and even the possibility of recognising the unilaterally declared Palestinian state, which has been considered as too pro-Palestinian in some Member States although it was well received in Spain. Apart from that, the Swedish Presidency strengthened the dialogue with Washington in the first EU-US summit with the Obama administration which dealt with the management of the economic crisis, climate change and the strengthened commitment of the EU in the Af-Pak region.¹² Other summits were held with Brazil, China, India, Russia, South Africa and Ukraine, focusing in most cases on the preparation for the Copenhagen summit.

Despite the relative international calmness during the second half of the year – in deep contrast to the Czech semester which faced the unexpected Gaza and Russian gas disputes or the equally difficult foreign agenda of the French Presidency that handled the 2008 war in Georgia – three episodes, probably minor from a Swedish perspective, were noticeable in Spain. First, the pragmatic response of the EU Presidency to the civil-military coup that installed a new president in Honduras last summer, whereas Spain would have welcomed a much more inflexible EU collective reaction. Second, relations with Cuba, since the Spanish Foreign Minister proposed in Havana last October some changes to the EU's common position regarding the island that the Swedish Presidency rejected. Third, an incident between Sweden and Morocco (officially, on a bilateral basis Rabat-Stockholm and thus disconnected from the EU Presidency) when the Moroccan government ordered the departure of a Swedish diplomat for handing an official report to the Polisario Front, the rebel movement seeking the independence of the Spanish former colony of Western Sahara. Interestingly, a few weeks later, Spain had to face up to a much more problematical crisis with Morocco that was also linked to the disputed territory of Western Sahara (annexed by the North African kingdom when Spaniards left in 1975) and it consisted of a hunger strike at a Spanish airport by Aminatou Haidar, a prominent campaigner for Sahrawi self-determination, who was expelled from her home country simply for her refusal to declare her nationality as Moroccan.

Regarding enlargement and relations with the EU's neighbours, Swedish and Spanish governments have not diverged. Both countries agree on the need for progress in Turkey's accession negotiations and support the EU

¹² Spain (with 1,000 troops) and Sweden (with more than 400) contribute to the NATO-led ISAF security mission in Afghanistan.

integration process of the countries of the Western Balkans.¹³ The significant role of the Presidency regarding the somewhat surprising Icelandic candidature was criticised by the Spanish media (see below), but the Madrid government also agreed about putting Iceland on a fast track to join the EU, relying on improving access to Icelandic waters for Spanish fishermen during the future accession negotiations. With regard to the ENP, the implementation of the Eastern Partnership and the attention paid to Russia and Ukraine on energy issues was balanced with a Swedish discourse underlining the need for greater cooperation with the Mediterranean region, looking to the Spanish Presidency to revitalise the hitherto deadlocked Union for the Mediterranean.

A provisional Spanish assessment of the Swedish semester: much brightness and some minor shadows

As has already been said, the Swedish Presidency was not received in Spain with very high expectations but it has gained wide acceptance during the semester for providing stability to the Union after the Czech experience and for achieving specific successes in institutional affairs (particularly with regard to the entry into force of the Treaty), the management of the economic crisis, and the preparation for the Copenhagen climate change summit. The members of the Spanish government have publicly praised the Presidency achievements in different areas, starting with Prime Minister Zapatero, who explicitly supported his Swedish colleague's solution to the claims of Václav Klaus, thus ending the Lisbon Treaty ratification process, and who also deemed the appointments of the two EU top jobs as a very good result. The Spanish Minister of Finance Elena Salgado also acknowledged in public the job done by her Swedish colleague Anders Borg in improving the supervision and regulation of the financial markets, as also did the Spanish Minister for Equality regarding Swedish advances in gender equality and improved protection against discrimination during the semester and the Spanish Junior Minister for Latin America regarding the sensitivity shown by Sweden in promoting EU-Latin America relations.

Only in one specific, although minor, aim of the Presidency, namely the objective of concluding the patient mobility directive, did the Spanish

¹³ During the semester, Croatia and Slovenia reached an agreement in their old territorial dispute that puts Croatia closer to accession. The Swedish Presidency was also successful on visa liberalisation in the Schengen Area countries for Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro. Finally, the political and legal conflict about Kosovo – Spain being one of the five countries of the EU that have not yet recognised the new state – was relatively calm although the proceedings in the International Court of Justice in the Hague on the legitimacy of the independence are planned to start during the last weeks of the semester.

government openly oppose the Swedish proposal for cross-border health-care, and blocked with other six countries the recognition of EU patients' right to treatment in other Member States. The Spanish Health Minister explained that the proposal would have cost the public health system an additional two billion Euros a year since it would give patients travelling abroad entitlement to private treatment they would not get at home.

From the public opinion perspective, the evaluation of the semester is less enthusiastic although this judgement is more connected with the general lack of ambition in the current momentum of the European integration process, reflected in the low political profile of the new European Council President and High Representative, than with the specific Swedish responsibility for that. Nevertheless, very few op-ed articles in the main three Spanish newspapers (*El País*, *El Mundo* and *ABC*) have referred to the Swedish Presidency in critical or laudatory terms during the last few weeks. The only strong criticism of Sweden in the editorials was for abandoning the role of honest broker to skew policy-making towards Swedish preferences regarding the supposedly unjustified strong support of the Icelandic fast-track accession, fostered in combination with a Scandinavian Commissioner for Enlargement.¹⁴ Another, lesser, criticism has to do with the report submitted in late October on the future 'European External Action Service' whose blueprint has been considered too intergovernmental and is criticised for not including consular protection and cooperation in development among the tasks of the Service. The other mentions of the Presidency found in Spanish newspapers are merely descriptive or just take advantage of a particular Swedish policy position to criticise the domestic stance of the Spanish government.¹⁵ Notwithstanding all this, the final assessment in Spain of the Swedish office will be determined by the achievement or not of a global deal on climate in the Copenhagen conference. Even if the Swedish Presidency has already provided leadership in the preparatory climate change talks and, at the end of the day, the outcome of the conference depends much more on the US and China than on Europe.

¹⁴ See, for example, the article published in *El Mundo* on 20 July 2009: 'Islandia se cuela en la fila de aspirantes a la Unión Europea' ('Iceland jumps the queue of candidate members to the EU') available at: www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2009/07/20/union_europea/1248076374.html or, on the same topic, 'Cuidado con Islandia' ('Watch out for Iceland'), published in *El País* on 30 July 2009, available at: www.elpais.com/articulo/opinion/Cuidado/Islandia/elpepiopi/20090730elpepiopi_2/Tes.

¹⁵ See, for example, 'Brotos verdes en China' ('Green shoots in China'), published by *ABC* on 18 July 2009, on the need to curtail extraordinarily high Spanish public deficit, as supported by the Swedish Presidency, available at: www.abc.es/hemeroteca/historico-18-07-2009/sevilla/Opinion/brotos-verdes-en-china_922635886434.html.

SWEDEN GIVES A NORDIC FLAVOUR TO THE EU 2020 STRATEGY: SWEDISH PRESIDENCY BETWEEN CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND LONG-TERM VISION

Attila Ágh

Constructing the EU for the next decade

The French–Czech–Swedish team presidency has been focusing on global crisis management but its task has continuously shifted from this short-term crisis management to long-term strategy building. This is due partly to the relative success of the crisis management after the first year and partly to the EU Road Map, which has indicated the end of the Lisbon Strategy by 2010 and has necessitated its renewal for the next decade. From among many other important roles to play, the assessment of the Swedish Presidency will depend on its role in preparing the long-term strategy building that became the central job by the second half of 2009. The mid-term evaluation can only be positive in this respect, since Sweden has given the super-planning a push in a good direction by putting the twin tasks of the social dimension and the new community policies to the fore in the preparation of the Post-Lisbon Strategy (PLS), which has recently been called the EU 2020 Strategy.¹

As a first reaction and damage limitation to the sharp economic downturn, on 26 November 2008 the Commission proposed a European Economy Recovery Plan (EERP). The EERP has admitted that ‘The global financial crisis has hit the EU hard’ and it has built its programme on the continuity of the Lisbon Strategy (LS): ‘The Lisbon Strategy has already strengthened the European economic fundamentals. Appropriately tailored, Lisbon strategy structural reforms could be an appropriate short-term policy response to the crisis as they strengthen economic resilience and flexibility’ (Commission, 2008d:4). The drastic turning point is quite clear if one compares the 2008 and 2009 Spring European Councils. The 2008 Spring Council mentioned the ‘longer-term challenges’ only marginally, although it put forward the mid-term perspectives of elaborating the PLS: ‘The European Council furthermore stresses that a continued EU-level commitment to structural reforms and sustainable development and social cohesion will be necessary after 2010 in order to lock in the progress

¹ The Commission’s President José Manuel Barroso has issued a manifesto as *Political Guidelines for the Next Commission*, and he has mentioned in the Introduction to this manifesto: ‘In particular, we need to revise the current Lisbon strategy to fit the post 2010 period, turning it into a strategy for an integrated vision of “EU 2020”’ (Barroso, 2009:3). I will use in this paper PLS and EU 2020 Strategy interchangeably, with a preference for the new term of the EU 2020 Strategy.

achieved by the renewed Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs. The European Council invites the Commission, the Council and the National Lisbon coordinators to start reflecting on the future of the Lisbon strategy in the post-2010 period' (Council, 2008:4).²

The 2009 Spring Council, in turn, dealt with the global crisis with full force. Crisis management has continued to be the first priority in the preparations for the PLS as well. Actually, the closing years of the LS may be characterized by the statement that 'A global crisis requires global responses' (Council, 2009a:7). Accordingly, the 2009 Spring European Council focused on crisis management and it approached the LS in this spirit as well by 'making full use of the renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs' in the global crisis management: 'In the current crisis, the renewed Lisbon Strategy, including the current Integrated Guidelines, remains the effective framework for fostering sustainable growth and jobs. The crisis underlines the need to pursue and accelerate structural reforms, which will bolster the credibility and impact of stimulus measures. (...) The European Council endorses the updated country-specific integrated recommendations for the economic and employment policies of the Member States and calls for their swift implementation. In this context, the European Council looks forward to the proposals on the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy the Commission will present during the second half of this year' (Council, 2009a:5).

The shift from short-term crisis management to long-term strategy building also presupposes the move from the permanent summitry back to the EU decision-making mechanisms. There are basically two problems with the permanent summitry. First, the legitimacy, transparency and efficiency of these meetings can be questioned. Second, the summitry has turned out more and more to be the club of the big states. The biggest problem of the permanent summitry has been the increase in the small-big state controversy in the EU, since this summitry has turned out to be a Big State Show with the few global leaders. In the EU, the smaller Member States have complained increasingly because they have felt that they could be left out in this institutional disorder. However, it has become clear that these preparatory meetings cannot be limited to the frequent informal gatherings

² As a general negative view, 'the Lisbon Strategy has fallen short where it really counts, that is both in qualitative terms – as an attempt to combine economic, social and environmental aims – and quantitatively, since the goal of seventy per cent employment rate has been missed by almost five percentage points' (Kellermann et al, 2009:2). The Swedish non-paper formulates the common wisdom: 'The Lisbon Strategy has been successful in some respects, but less so in others. There seems to be a "delivery gap" between our commitments at European level and what we deliver at national level' (2009:2).

of the leaders of big Member States because without properly involving all Member States this approach to global crisis management can be counter-productive as a result of sometimes just following the hardly disguised national interests of the bigger Member States that dominate this permanent summitry process. The European Council has considered the crisis management as a long-lasting process at several levels and by various actors within the EU; it still only reached its own first comprehensive decision at the June 2009 European Council (Council, 2009b). The December 2009 European Council may return to the normal, legitimate EU decision-making process.³

The deep tension between *competitiveness* and *solidarity* has also lasted the entire decade of the LS and it has produced a large variety of solutions from the productivist approach to technocratic views. There is still no match between economic competitiveness and social solidarity, since the efforts to strike a balance between economic efficiency and social justice have not been successful; and in the most pragmatic terms the employment targets have not been reached either. Thus, competitiveness and productivity have been treated more and more as a comprehensive issue in the productivist approach. Although there has been a painful reminder in the recession periods of employment with a simple quantitative meaning, still the qualitative meaning of the “knowledge worker” has come to the fore with the emerging idea of “social productivity”. Regional policy has to be based on the correspondence between economic, social and territorial cohesion. The LS has also meant a turning point in the EU-level social dimension because it has Europeanized to a great extent the Member States’ social policy. The current Social Agenda runs from 2006 to 2010, and the Commission is preparing a renewed Social Agenda for the post-Lisbon era by updating this policy mix.⁴

³ ‘The EU is about more than just the big states’, as the *European Voice* (26 February 2009) quotes Alexander Stubb, Finland’s foreign minister, since these informal meetings could lead to ‘institutional confusion’. Carl Bildt, the foreign minister of Sweden, did not understand ‘the mathematics behind’ the G20.

⁴ ‘Productivity, in turn, would have to be understood in terms of “social productivity” the core of which would comprise an increase in quality of jobs, the inclusion of external costs (...) the ideal of an innovation-based competitiveness can be combined with a socially just and sustainable model of society’ (Kellermann et al, 2009:4). ‘The transfer of social competences from the national to the EU level seemed to have reached a threshold, a trend broadly confirmed later with the Lisbon Treaty (2007) (...) despite the increasing disparity between the EU national social systems, labour market and social protection systems were increasingly similar for all countries’. Consequently, the LS has Europeanized the Member States’ social policy, since ‘Compared to the past, the Lisbon Strategy and its OMC have led to a substantial enlargement of the EU employment and social agenda on matters of national priority’ (Goetschy, 2009:76,81).

The Productivist Challenge has been formulated by Gösta Esping-Andersen in the following way: ‘The new policy vocabulary mirrors a growing consensus that social policy must become ‘productivist’, to coin an expression traditionally used in Swedish policy making. That is, social policy should actively maximise the productive potential of the population so as to minimise its need for, and dependence on, government benefits’ (Esping-Andersen, 2002:55). Becoming closer to the drafting of the PLS, the leading EU policy institutes have reiterated the productivist approach after a turbulent decade on a higher level: ‘Lisbon has been neither a complete success story nor a complete failure. It is now important for the EU to look ahead and to realise it is facing new challenges that could not have been foreseen in 2000. A post-2010 Lisbon strategy ought to focus on “competitiveness through innovation”. But how to best foster innovation? This contribution argues that innovation can be best achieved by additional investment in human capital, a dimension that has not been given enough attention in the original Lisbon strategy of 2000. (...) A new Lisbon process (2010–2020) will have to be designed with a completely different background. (...) educational policies that strengthen the quantity and quality of education, thus leading to higher skill levels, will have positive side effects. One can expect not only more growth, but also higher employment rates and less inequality’ (Gros and Roth, 2008:1–2). This proposal could be a real breakthrough in the endless debate between the rigidity of the “growth and job” approach and the “softness” of the social or human dimension, since it combines the human investment with the direct “growth and jobs” economic practices.

This point of departure for the new strategic planning has also been demanded by many analysts: ‘Obviously, the effects of the global financial and economic crisis on European growth and the EU’s response will be of immediate concern. We believe, however, that the Lisbon Strategy should focus on the long-term orientation of the European Economic and Social Model’ (Kellermann et al, 2009:1). Although in the 1990s the social and employment outputs lagged behind those of economic integration, it has still become even more evident by the late 2000s that the LS is more than an economic development programme, since it has to combine the European economic and social models. Thus, these latest documents ‘sent out a twofold message: that the EU was reforming itself through accelerated economic and labour market structural reform, and the modernization of social protection systems’ through policy coordination in an effort to achieve a coherent integrated project (Goetschy, 2009:75). This is, indeed,

the European Economic and Social Model (see Stuchlik and Kellermann, 2009 for a comprehensive overview).⁵

The Swedish Presidency enters: The social dimension as the first initiative

All in all, the situation in 2009 is the following between the short- and long-term tasks for the Swedish Presidency: ‘The short-term measures should improve the economic conditions for business and should also be in line with the **medium- and long-term** objectives of the Lisbon Strategy. These measures should also contribute to the creation of more jobs. The Council broadly welcomes the Lisbon Package submitted by the European Commission. In this respect, the Community Lisbon Programme is welcomed as a valuable tool.’ Furthermore, ‘A clear commitment in the spirit of joint ownership to continue implementing **Lisbon structural reforms beyond 2010** is necessary in order to boost confidence among citizens and businesses. (...) The micro-economic elements of the Lisbon Strategy need to be brought closely together in a well-defined “Competitiveness Agenda” that would be complementary and mutually reinforcing with other aspects of the Strategy’ (Council of Ministers, 2009a:7–8). The “integration of integration” is the final word of the evaluation of the Lisbon Strategy, since the integration of institutions and the integration of policies are the new task as well as the base for the new brave vision of the EU 2020.⁶

The European Council invited the Commission and the Council in the March 2008 decision to prepare a draft document for the EU 2020 (Council, 2008:4). There has been a common understanding that the first

⁵ The main issue is whether social policy remains one of the subordinate aims or follows the itinerary set by the Social Agenda (2005–2010) and confirmed by the Renewed Social Agenda (2 July 2008, Commission, 2008b). There have been signs since spring 2008 that the global crisis has contributed to ‘putting social and environmental concerns back onto the EU’s growth and jobs agenda (...) to shift the Lisbon Agenda away from its purely “growth and jobs” focus of the past three years and to put environment and citizens more “in the foreground” (...) to proceed resolutely with reforms’ (“EU ‘Lisbon Agenda’ gets social makeover”, 18 March 2008). See also the opposite claim: the old agenda will stay due to the global crisis (“PA bosses assess Barroso’s flagship ‘Lisbon Strategy’”, 6 August 2009) (www.euractiv.com).

⁶ The Lisbon Council has published a comprehensive overview of the LS first decade (European Growth and Jobs Monitor 2009, www.lisboncouncil.net/media/publications). The Lisbon Council has played an important role in monitoring and advising the LS, for instance with a series of conferences (the 2009 Growth and Jobs Summit, March 2009). Maria Rodrigues has also channelled her contribution to the LS development through the Lisbon Council to a great extent. Ann Mettler, executive director and co-founder of the Lisbon Council, has reconfirmed the need for ‘a solid, visionary and comprehensive medium- to long term strategy’ (“In defence of the Lisbon Agenda”, 8 June 2009, www.euractiv.com, see in great detail Rodrigues, 2009).

proposal has to be ready by December 2009. Obviously, this is mainly the task of the new Commission that would enter only in late 2009, so despite the expert continuity in the Commission's staff, this deadline seems to be difficult to meet. In the case of its delivery on time, the EU 2020 should be outlined at the December 2009 Summit in the Swedish Presidency and drafted at the March 2010 Summit during the Spanish Presidency. However, this timing is too ambitious and too risky, since its full programme can be completed and the details of its implementation can be elaborated at the March 2011 Summit during the Hungarian Presidency. Obviously, (1) there is a need for a long consultation process with the many actors concerned, like the CoR and EESC (see for instance EESC, 2009), and (2) the global crisis is still unfolding, which spells uncertainty. Finally (3), the LS is still supposedly continuing in 2010, and there is a need to complete and evaluate it before the new EU 2020 Strategy can be launched, although the latest EU documents have confirmed this accelerated itinerary (Council, 2009a:5).

The Swedish Presidency has an optimistic approach to the EU 2020 by emphasizing that 'we can expect some innovation in this field'. Although the Swedes have noted that 'During the Spanish Presidency in 2010 a new agenda to replace the Lisbon strategy will be launched', they have also developed a marked role for themselves in preparing the EU 2020: 'Without pre-empting the agenda for the following presidency, it should be possible to argue that the Swedish Presidency could be in a position where *agenda-setting* leadership could be exercised in this field' (Langdal and von Sydow, 2009:8). This Nordic-style agenda-setting is both welcome and useful, since the EU has been stuck for a long time in the troubles around the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. The urgent tasks of the incumbent Swedish Presidency have been identified by the speech of the Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt in the European Parliament. Among the very first items on the agenda, he has mentioned the elaboration of the PLS: 'A review of the EU's Lisbon Strategy can contribute to a vital reform agenda. We will open discussions on this during the autumn.' It is very important that he has underlined the basic turn in the EU's history by declaring that 'with the Lisbon Treaty in place, we can close the chapter on an inward-looking phase in the EU's cooperation. The time has come for the EU to look outwards and into the future'. Finally, he has expressed his deep commitment to Nordic values and to the productivist approach in social policy: 'I want to see a Europe that continues to develop the European social model. That combines a well-functioning welfare system with growth. With social cohesion' (Reinfeldt, 2009:7,8,11, see also the *Work Programme for the Swedish Presidency of the EU*, 2009:30–32).

The Swedish Presidency has prepared a “non-paper” that has presented eight proposals for the PLS, e.g. stronger involvement of regional and local governments, a stronger role for the Community Programme and finally ‘Creating more institutions and/or institutional frameworks that will underpin long-term growth, improved productivity, sustainable policies for high employment and public finances’ (2009:6). There is no doubt that the “Swedes push for Nordic flavour” in the EU 2020 Strategy, since the new style can be seen from the very beginning of the Swedish Presidency. There has been some news about an even more accelerated agenda: that they would like to adopt the new strategy before their mandate ends. Although a more cautious and less urgent approach would be more advisable for the EU, the direction of the Swedish Presidency is welcome in the EU 2020 preparation. Allegedly, ‘the Swedes aspire to a new Lisbon Agenda very much in their own image’, namely ‘paying a lot of attention to the social dimension’ with flexicurity and ‘active inclusion strategies’ on one side, and the ‘green growth and environmental sustainability are like to feature high among the strategy’s new priorities’ on the other. These twin tasks are ‘the backbone of Swedish attempts to cast EU policy along Nordic lines’ that has to be supported but a long process can be expected in the EU to agree upon these goals.⁷

Obviously, the “innovations” that have been offered by the Swedish Presidency embrace both the inclusion of the social dimension and the introduction of the new community policies. The Union’s response to the crisis ‘should be based on a coordinated approach integrating economic, employment and social policies (...) should mobilise all available national and Community instruments and fully integrate growth, employment, solidarity, social protection and inclusion strategies’ (Commission, 2009e:1). The summary of the main message is that ‘The future Lisbon strategy should be focused on well-defined goals, relevant to European citizens, it should be reinforced to deliver sustainable growth, social cohesion and more and better jobs, ensuring long term sound public finances and modern social protection system’ (Commission, 2009e:1). According to the Swedish efforts with “a Nordic flavour”, this policy mix has to be composed basically from cohesion and sustainability.

⁷ See the summary “Swedish push for Nordic flavour to Lisbon Strategy II”, 6 August 2009, www.euractive.com/en/socialeurope/swedes-push-nordic-flavour. The EESC is pushing in the same direction, for “quality jobs”, social progress and social cohesion, and for flexicurity as “effective security” (2009:5–6).

EU 2020 with the new policies taking central stage: The second Swedish initiative

The new community policies – energy, the knowledge triangle and climate change – have appeared very markedly on the EU agenda in the last years. In the Swedish Presidency they have reached a culmination point that can be exemplified with the December 2009 Copenhagen Summit on global climate change. The Swedish Presidency has represented a very characteristic approach in handling the new community policies in the spirit of the sustainable development based on the green economy and knowledge-based society. However, the turn towards the new community policies has very demanding institutional and budgeting consequences and the extent to which the Swedish Presidency can cope with these new–old difficulties is still an open issue.

The implementation of the Lisbon Treaty will be the long-awaited institutional match to the LS/PLS. It will produce a new mission statement of the EU as a rejuvenation of the EU by the new Strategy, which includes new community policies with new institutions and redesigned public sectors in the Member States. There is a need for the strong “metagovernance” at the top that enables the EU to make integrated decisions, since the EU 2020 and budgeting policies also have to be adjusted or integrated as well. The global developments as external structural constraints have been forcing the EU to change its institutional structure in order to be able to develop its long-term planning, policy coordination and strategic vision. With the emerging new world order, the EU entered a world of uncertainty, since ‘Future developments remain uncertain’ (Council, 2009b:5). Thus, not only the crisis management capacity, but even more the anticipatory capacity and risk management are of great importance. Consequently, the EU has to strengthen its anticipatory and adaptive capacity in the next decade, creating institutions for the “general flexicurity” in all basic policies like the European Systemic Risk Board in financial supervision (Council, 2009b:7). The EU needs, indeed, complex goal setting with a clear vision, and its implementation has to be managed by a metagovernance type of institution. A Governance Initiative was launched in early 2009, quite clearly outlining the complexity of the governance: ‘The Council acknowledges the multidimensional nature of governance, which includes political, social, economic, security, legal, institutional, cultural and environmental aspects, at all levels. All these aspects are interlinked and should be addressed in a holistic and balanced way’ (Council of Ministers, 2009b:1). The reform of the LS as the elaboration of the PLS has to be based on the proper “governance mix” and “policy mix” in the spirit of integrative balancing, both in the long term for the

next decade and in the short and medium terms for the subsequent team presidencies.⁸

Initially, the LS was based on strategic planning but left out public sector reform, although the public sector was supposed to perform the job of strategic planning. Later on, the LS concern has been more and more extended to public sector management, but it has never been formulated clearly that the high performance of the public sector is one of the key pre-conditions of the LS's success. Accordingly, while in the first decade of the LS the budgeting approach and the LS lines have been separated, at the end of this decade the recognition has come that they have to be merged. Whereas earlier the public sector was outside the LS framework both institutionally and policy wise, it cannot be so any longer, since the public sector has been penetrated by the Lisbon targets that have budgetary consequences as well, which has also re-opened the debate on the general principles of budgeting or on the financial perspectives. It has been a problem from the very beginning that the declared objectives of the LS have had no financial resources and this has only been partly corrected by the integration of the LS with cohesion policy. The case is, again, that the EU 2020 starts in 2010 or 2011 and the new financial perspectives in 2014; in such a way the non-correspondence between them can be continued. Some experts have suggested, however, that all solidarity-related expenditures have to be drastically reduced for the proper financing of the new community policies: 'The Lisbon Strategy is a case in point. In spite of extensive relabeling, currently only one tenth of the EU budget is spent on the items directly related to Lisbon (...). Three quarters of EU spending in the past 20 years has been consistently directed towards agriculture and structural policy, leaving little room for new priorities' (Santos and Neheider, 2009:2). Basically, this effort of restructuring the EU budget and focusing more on the EU 2020 targets is very positive, but it is overdriven if focusing only on competitiveness by neglecting solidarity. This narrow technocratic view would be highly counterproductive, since it could split the EU and it would create serious long-term tensions. Against the narrow-minded approach one can refer to Gros and Roth's argument (2008:1-2) as follows: 'It is also apparent that the next Lisbon strategy will have to be valid for all 27+ Member States, including the goal of reducing the still-

⁸ I have developed these ideas of integrative balancing at length in my paper (Ágh, 2009).

The integrative balancing has to be applied at all decision-making levels as the eminent EU document, the White Paper on MLG suggests (Committee of Regions, 2009).

substantial disparities in income per capita between old and new Member States'.⁹

Conclusions: An EU rejuvenated by the crisis

The EU has to return to the brave vision by formulating its outstanding global role in terms of European values, through social productivity based on competitiveness. In the global competition of various models, the EU offers the best combination of economic and social dimensions. It gives a new opportunity for the EU as the soft superpower to participate actively in the establishment of global governance with the partnership principle of effective multilateralism instead of unilateral hegemony. The “EU competitiveness” and “EU cohesion” have to be put on an equal footing through the principle of *social productivity*. The EU has to move ahead in the global competition as one compact unit in the spirit of economic, social and territorial cohesion as the Lisbon Treaty stipulates. This means that the competitiveness programme has to be completed by a catching-up programme, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. There is a need for this kind of Road Map, with new community policies and new budgeting on one side and with renewed efforts for fully integrating the new Member States, including the EU 2020 agenda, on the other. The future strategy has to be elaborated with a few *clear strategic priorities* such as (1) a green or low-carbon economy, (2) an innovation-centred, productivist society, (3) policy-driven financial perspectives and (4) a modernized public sector with high-quality public services. The EU 2020 Strategy has to be based on a well-coordinated set of concrete programmes, with the main objectives specified and with a detailed set of indicators that will facilitate a radical programming turn towards super-planning.¹⁰

The October 2009 Summit has been overburdened with the troubles around the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. This meeting has also been extremely busy with the planning of its follow-up events. Nonetheless, this Summit has still focused on the preparations of the EU 2020 Strategy and its outlines have shown the impact of the Swedish Presidency as discussed

⁹ The Bruegel Institute has also recently launched a new programme for the Commission that is directly related to the EU 2020 Strategy and it has also suggested a better match between the EU 2020 and the next financial perspectives (see Sapir, 2009).

¹⁰ On territorial cohesion see Commission, 2008a,c. As it is well known, after a long prehistory the Lisbon Treaty has introduced the principle of territorial cohesion. In 2011, during the Hungarian Presidency, the EU will elaborate a comprehensive concept on the unity of economic, social and territorial cohesion. This essential link between the LS and cohesion policy has been carefully documented by the Directorate General for Regional Policy, including the overview of the “economic crisis – the response from European Cohesion Policy” (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funds/recovery).

above. In its part III (*Economic, financial and employment situation*) the decision of the European Council has declared again that ‘it is necessary to prepare a coordinated strategy’. It has reiterated its former demand that ‘The European Council looks forward to discussing a new European strategy for jobs and growth as part of the upcoming review of the Lisbon Strategy’ (Council, 2009c:8). The final evaluation of the Swedish Presidency will to a great extent depend upon the accomplishment of the twin tasks of the social dimension and new community policies in the December 2009 European Council meeting.¹¹

For the Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian (SBH) incoming team presidency, the EU 2020 Strategy is high on the agenda. It is in fact the priority of priorities. The elaboration of the new vision for the EU and the launching of the EU 2020 Strategy during the SBH team presidency – hopefully – will be combined with the successful implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, which is the proper institutional base for the new Strategy. The preparation of the EU 2020 as a long-term vision of the future of the EU needs a common effort of all the Member States and their policy institutes or the epistemic communities.¹²

After a protracted and painful ratification process the EU needs an optimistic mood for reinventing itself in the early twenty-first century: ‘If the EU did not exist, we would have to invent it today. (...) Europe does not need less Europe – it needs more Europe. The global crisis shows that monetary union cannot be achieved without political union. (...) This crisis cries out to be transformed into a long overdue new founding of the EU. (...) an EU rejuvenated by the crisis’ (Beck, 2009).

¹¹ The European Council on 11–12 December 2009 deals with the post-2010 sustainable development strategy and the Spring 2010 Summit is supposed to adopt the main policy orientations, while in June 2010 some more detailed decisions may be reached, including integrated guidelines and a new type of Community Lisbon Program. The EESC proposes a ‘strategic reorganization’ and ‘a different name to the new European strategy’ (2009:4).

¹² On 25 May 2009 there was a conference in Budapest on PLS under the guidance of Maria Rodrigues with many internationally known experts presenting good initiatives. A summary note about this conference has also been mentioned at the 28 May 2009 meeting of the Competitiveness Council. At the Budapest conference on the PLS the leading experts underlined the need for long-term institutional reforms. Ian Begg emphasized that ‘national ownership of it continues to be unsatisfactory’ and a stronger Community approach is needed (Begg, 2009:1). Similarly, Hans Martens focused on the need for ‘a comprehensive long term framework’ (Martens, 2009). These issues have been developed at length in an EPC paper, noting the necessity for the involvement of the public sector and public finances in EU 2020 (Martens and Zuleeg, 2009).

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**APPENDIX:
INDICATIVE QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO THE AUTHORS**

- 1) In general, what is the perception of the Swedish Presidency thus far in your capital?
- 2) The Priorities:
 - a. What is your view on this set of priorities? Are they appropriate?
 - b. In terms of results; has the Swedish Presidency delivered according to expectations?
 - c. In particular: how has Sweden coped with the institutional/constitutional issues?
- 3) On an organisational point of view: is the Presidency seen as coherent and well-prepared?
- 4) Which of the following roles does best characterise the Swedish Presidency (and how)
 - a. (honest) Broker
 - b. Agenda-setter
 - c. Representative
- 5) Could you give examples of how the Swedish Presidency has played these roles?
- 6) Leadership: has Sweden provided leadership in any of the prioritised areas or elsewhere?
 - a. What is your view on the leadership provided by the Swedish Presidency in relation to the Trio?
- 7) What is, in your view, the main challenge ahead in order for the Swedish Presidency to be considered a success?

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