

22 SEPTEMBER 2010

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Institut Europa Varietas - Europa Varietas Institute

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Dr. András István Törke (ed.)

From the Slovenian Presidency to the Polish Presidency

EuVI Analysis Nr. 8.

Comparative analysis of the presidencies of the Council of the European Union and preparatory processes between the period of years 2008-2011, special assessment of Hungarian Presidency

ISSN 2061-9812





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Contents

Introduction	4
I. Distribution of responsibility between Presidencies (trios)	5
II. Assessment of Presidencies, including survey on the Belgian Presidency	8
III. The Hungarian EU Presidency	15
Summary and conclusions	18

Introduction

From 1st January till 30th June 2011, it is Hungary's turn to take over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. In the last term in office of the Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian trio, Hungary will face real challenges in the presidency period and the profound integration to the EU despite the fact that its institutional capacity is inferior to the previous members from the trio. According to a traditional rule, the trial of the entitled EU membership is to fulfil the first presidency role.

The presidency is also important for Hungary in the path towards gaining full membership which requires the transformation of the EU-compatible institutions by stimulating efficiency and to increase awareness of the Hungarian EU-identity as the population will evaluate the presidency role in the aspect of the community procedures.

Besides this, the six-month presidency hides plenty of possibilities and challenges. The key is a careful preparation so as the management of the probable domestic affairs rising from the preparatory phase at both EU and presidential level. Regarding this preparatory plan, the preparation has a satisfactory progress albeit both political and professional preparation has to be adaptable for modifications and be flexible in order to follow events and actions during preparation and presidential phases.

The successful outcome of the preparatory process also depends on that at what level we are aware of the objectives and priorities of the previous presidencies such as well the objectives and plans of our period; how we take advantage the best practice such as success or failures of previous presidencies. Besides taking the role of the representative role of the EU's supranational and average objectives, Hungary has to negotiate wisely, set up package deals, and keep the balance between the member states' minor issues whilst being aware of the weak points, national interest and short- and mid-term plans of them.

Hungary must not forget about the recycling and promotion of the results and outcome of the presidency, mainly for the EU and other international aspects of the Hungarian Presidency achievement. Should the political marketing not dominate the Hungarian Presidency then the country might regain international confidence which could also improve on the image of our country. Hungary needs all the potential and skills to establish satisfactory negotiating position in order to achieve our goals and not to be excluded from the mainstream international actions and negotiations for the lack of expertise in this field.

This study is based on these criteria and would assist with a comparative analysis of the preparatory actions from the Slovene till the Polish Presidency to the presidencies for the period of 2008-2012.

22th September 2010, Budapest

I. Distribution of responsibility between Presidencies (trios)

(German-Polish) Slovenian trio (2007-2008)

The EU political context of the Slovenian Presidency was largely determined by being the last member from the German-Portuguese-Slovenian trio thus the major initiatives had already been settled and completed not leaving room for Slovenian decisions.

The most significant project of the German-Portuguese-Slovenian trio presidency was signing the Lisbon Treaty and the later the Slovenian Presidency was only in charge of the ratification (although as well known that the ratification issue was vague till 2009 fall). Likewise the Schengen enlargement has been also proceeded before the Slovenian period and neither spring of 2008 brought changes in EU foreign affairs aspects. Therefore its preparatory for the presidency in the beginning of 2005, Ljubljana could have been prepared for a relaxed and deepen character-kind of presidency.

The French-Czech-Swedish trio (2008-2009)

The Czech EU Presidency gave headache to the Liberal Government of the Czech Topolánek who was not only a euro-sceptic Head of State but his government was able to be in office only with a special agreement made with its opposition. These circumstances resulted in a 'secret' Sarkozy-Topolánek Pact during autumn 2008, which foresaw significant French support in case the Czech gives priority to important French interests.

The French also demanded that in return for their support on Czech Presidency, apart from the fact that for the Czech the Mediterranean Union was precedent though for its legal background was polemic to the EU, the Mediterranean Union cannot be forgotten. The Czechs' other difficulty was not yet being the member of the Eurogroup and the outcome of the economic crisis demanded to observe the Czechs during their presidency period (besides this, Sarkozy promised that as an observer, the Czech Chancellor can also take part in the G20).

In the aspect of the climate package, Sarkozy and Topolánek agreed on that France helps with similar claims to Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland as well. The goal of Topolánek was that the French succeeds on the EU-summit of December 2008 in order not to cause problems for them in domestic policy issues.

The text of the Sarkozy-Topolánek agreement had been leaked in November 2008 with spoling plans, scandalise the reputation of the French President and also deflowering the French-Czech relations. At the end of 2008 the Czechs accused France of trying to keep their leading role in the Union; Klaus stated that the French wants to drain the Czech Presidency and Sarkozy was assuring the continuity for the Georgian question from 2009. The Czech felt that Russia wants to negotiate with larger states (as well with France) besides neglecting the smaller member countries independently of the fact that Czechs are on

role. Above all, a German MEP suggested that The Czech Republic should change presidency with Sweden because of the economic crisis.

France had troublesome relations with Sweden. Each presidency inherits the 80% of the preceding priorities though negotiations had been entirely stopped between France, the Czech Republic and Sweden. According to plans, Sarkozy had been also taken part in Czech-similar preparatory phase of Sweden. Albeit the negotiations of 2nd June 2009 had been postponed to date 3rd July for the decision of Sarkozy based upon the rush of EP elections campaign therefore the French proposal could not built in the Swedish Agenda.

Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian trio (2010-2011)

In the framework of the new group-like presidency, previously troika-like presidency, Hungary will commence to fulfil its tasks sharing with Spain and Belgium. The system of group presidency was necessary to introduce due to the new member states since their institutional efficiency and capacity of their public policy has not yet been considered reasonable enough to manage an entire period in office. Therefore the system of the presidential group of three has been established participating both old and new states.

The Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian trio tries to create a solid cooperation which can show example to following group-presidencies. The structured cooperation within the framework, the three Ministries of Foreign Affairs and assigned ministries responsible for the coordination of the preparation established a close up professional relationship.

The political cooperation consists of constantly organised meetings between the prime ministers, foreign ministers and the state secretaries in charge of the European Affairs. The shared decisions are being coordinated and prepared by the central contacts of the three states. In the aspect of the presidential staff training, the trio's countries host the other trio member's experts as lecturers in the framework of training sessions along with sending liaison diplomats to the other country's central coordinating units.

Still unknown what the common logo and motto of the trio is going to be. The launching of a trilingual and lucid website has been also mentioned (since then it was launched and can described as everything but lucid).

The management of the committee workgroups might imply the enlargement of the cooperation framework. Though the main rule is that the workgroups are managed by the current half-year in office, and even the control on workgroups in charge of certain examined issues can be ongoing over 18 months as well. According to a Spanish recommendation regarding the dossiers of the codecision procedure requiring meticulous expertise on the negotiation procedure, the trio should nominate an expert in order to help the current leader of the committee workgroups.

Regarding the thematic there are three significant factors:

- 2010 as the 'the year of poverty';
- period of 2007—2013 for budget objective control;
- period of 2014—2020 budget framework preparation.

Polish (—Danish—Cyprian) trio (2011-2012)

Poland is going to take the leading role in the Polish-Danish-Cyprian trio and will become the pioneer amongst lately joined Eastern European countries. Albeit Poland and Cyprus is a newcomer only Denmark has experience in the cooperation.

Moreover these three states are far not considered to allies in Europe and their legal system and social-political traditions quite differ from each other. The only common point of view can be the ‘maritime politics’. Basically two small states’ administrations have to synchronise their activity with a large state’s. Cyprus’ dense domestic affair complicates the situation and besides this, none of these states take part fully in the EU politics (euro-zone, Schengen). By all means, the members of the trio communicate with each other since the beginning of 2008.

II. Assessment of Presidencies, including survey on the Belgian Presidency

Either the nature of the trio presidency or from the viewpoint of the realities emerging from the European geopolitics, Ljubljana was rather heading to have an 'adequate' presidency than to write history and the feedback on its objectives have been allegedly achieved. As a positive outcome, the Slovenian Presidency has been judged to have fulfilled a well-organised and a level of high-expertise achievement and even could deliver some of its priorities as well as could manage the political challenges arisen (independency of Kosovo and the Tibetan riots).

Thus it could decrease the doubts might have risen for questioning the competence of the lately joined member states in 2004 as it did not only strengthen the equality amongst the new states already in the EU but also helped to reach a closer unit of the European integration.

Since a part of a well foreseen process Kosovo declared its independency on 17th February 2008, Slovenia was the last to acknowledge it on 5th of March. The Slovenian Presidency could not form a common European position: especially the large states were deciding completely independently, neglecting the EU Presidency and the CFSP spectacularly went on bankrupt.

Otherwise Slovenia was ignored by European states concluding their opinions since for the US influence; Slovenia had lost its credit regarding the common European position. The reason was that at the end of January 2008 a high ranking US diplomat asked his Slovenian colleague that Ljubljana to be the first at declaring the Independency of Kosovo. After all that Ireland voted no for the Treaty on 12th June 2008 though this matter had been posted to the following presidency.

The outcome of the Irish opposition, the Georgian and the economic crisis, the French Presidency started to have troubles. President Sarkozy quickly assumed the uncomfortable situation and focused on the significant goals out of 4 main EU priorities according to plan: priorities aiming to climate policy were completed with 2x30 results.

The summit on immigration was vain prepared and brought only binding, incomprehensive agreements. CAP is hardly mentioned and the Mediterranean Union will allocate small amounts for Eastern-European developments.

The problematic issue of the Lisbon Treaty had been left for the Swedish Presidency. Two tax issues amongst the national priorities were not concluded nor in short terms. The sustainment of the Union was not lucky with the October 2008 Pact with Czech although the case is not lost with the Spanish priorities.

By the Irish voting no the administrative procedure and its projects of its taking effect, the Lisbon Treaty has been tumbled. Amongst others, the French also agreed on ceasing the EU enlargement till the institutional background is not clarified although obviously the negotiations on integration with Croatia were stopped.

On the contrary, France was concerned about a 26 unity against the Irish: Sarkozy was urging a second election which seemed to be an external dictate. It was dated to March 2009, preceding the EP elections though finally Dublin agreed on a postponed, November 2009 date which criteria even weakened the EU cohesion.

Concerning the Russian-Georgian conflict, the French reaction was weak comparing it being in office and the two main elements was to wait and collaborate with the USA. The French tried to preserve its good relations with both parties from wartime and as an EU-president in office pushed forward the restoration of status quo ante.

The French diplomacy seeking to rely on the OSCE initially was opposed to make a resolution. Although by the attack of the Georgian infrastructure even the French interests have been threatened thus the French overtook a larger confrontation with the Russians, at least in terms of declarations, and Sarkozy tried to appear more significant in disregarding the ceasefire.

Albeit the EU-partners were not alike that Sarkozy, aside the traditional, intergovernmental approval process of the common EU foreign policy, was discussing in Russia without and previous coordination. It seemed that the German-French axis is minimally coordinated on foreign policy and basically a German-French diplomatic race began.

The French priorities got to be postponed by the economic crisis. The moral of the crisis of 1929 was that the states had to intervene and on the other hand they had to act in global terms. In the EU the first step has been made though coordinated pan-European actions was urged in vain as well as was unable to form unity.

Nevertheless, the efforts of the French Presidency in this regard were not convincing and in any event, the BNP Parisbas became the largest eurozone allocation bank. On contrary to the 11-12th December 2008 Berlin Summit, which had preferred the solution at the member states' level, it resulted that the crisis would cost the 1,5% of EU-GDP ie approx. €200 billion euro to the EU.

The Czech Presidency neither prepared an emergency plan nor even for the predictable issues: e.g. elaborated plan was missing for the Russian-Ukrainian gas discussion and also for the Middle East conflict. Apart from this, the Czech foreign minister led the EU-delegation aiming to bring peace in the conflict of Gaza between Hamas and Israel. He also had the mediator role in the Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute though the Russians did not take them seriously and such as the Czech was not prepared for the effects of the economic crisis at all.

Czech Republic considers success the following points:

- economy (single actions against the financial and economic crisis, restoration of confidence and stability, rejection of protectionist movements; the protection of workplaces, stimulating economy growth, better regulation of financial markets, EU at international level – G20 meeting);

- Energy (Single Action, strengthening EU's energy security, the 'Southern Corridor' Summit; strategic energy research; energy market integration and liberalisation; increasing energy efficiency; climate protection);
- Europe in the world (solution to Gaza conflict; Eastern Partnership; EU enlargement; transatlantic cooperation; world summit on third world countries).

In the framework of the Nizza Treaty, Sweden was in office also closing a successful half year period. Its outstanding achievement was the closure of the ratification procedure of the Lisbon Treaty which opened the way with the EU's foreign affairs department, changes realised regarding the EP, permanent structured cooperation and as well with the regulation relating citizen's initiative rights put into practice.

The presidency solved easily the crisis triggered by Vaclav Klaus which was also caused by the Czech President regarding his demand towards the touchiness of Benes Decrees although EU did not declare the moral non-sustainability of the 13 discriminative Benes Decrees and neither demanded their repeal.

The other salient result was the success of the achieved single EU position on climate change on the Copenhagen meeting and also that the EU can develop its technology sector in mid-term against its competitors.

Albeit the EU-15 could not meet the Copenhagen requirements and even the EU release balance was only advantageous by counting on the noteworthy reduction of the new EU member states. On the 2009 December summit for 3 years the developing member states finally were offered a total of €7,2 billion for their climate protection efforts; Hungary supports the endeavour with €6 million.

Hungary set its key priorities towards concerning the visa-free travel for Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro whilst visa liberalisation talks for other Balkan countries keep going. The member state leaders accepted the so called Stockholm Program with the freedoms and security issues for the next five years which also includes the expansion of the border control free Schengen area. The new chapter of accession negotiations has been commenced for Turkey which favours the Swedish but Iceland dislikes the initiative.

The final summit of the Swedish Presidency concluded that the members supports the international taxation on financial transactions in order to avoid further crisis and the final declaration a notice on the issue was sent to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The member states respectively accepted the Larosière report on crisis management but Barroso President of the Commission found it as a modest result comparing to the original plans.

The critics are concerned about the weak activity of the Copenhagen Conference and the ignorance of the immigrant and organised crime problems during the Swedish period. The new High Representative, Catherine Ashton and the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy was elected unanimously during the Swedish phase.

In the latter respect, the Swedish were told off to have been cringed for the French veto in terms of the candidacy of Jean-Claude Juncker from Luxembourg. Some were duly

shocked that the Swedish generally giving plenty credits to transparency issues, allowed the member states 'secret' mutual games. Swedish tactics have acted completely fare by nominating colourless candidates which did not deepen any EU-inner conflict. Another matter arise that how much the aspect the EU's image and strength is regarded to be positive.

The Swedes biggest failure was having been unable to achieve substantial progress regarding the enforcement and settlement to the rights of medical care of the EU citizens and this topic had been even practically removed from the agenda of the Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian trio.

Concerning the CSDP, which was issued as major priority, the Swedish can account partial results:

- Increased flexibility of the battle-group concept and these due to the lack of political influence had never been used in real although in principle, can be deployed in 10days. The Swedish Presidency formed a separate directive in this matter.
- The second major topic scheduled to increase the efficiency of the European Coast Guard with reducing the fragmentation and dispersion. The council asked the Committee to draw up an action plan for late 2010 on this topic.
- In the field of the BITD (Pan-European Military Capacity), the members accepted a new joint declaration hence there was no progress in this topic sin the last 60 years.
- Finally, important actions and a concrete plan made out in early 2010 had been taken in the field of civil and military capacities synchronisation and on the topic of planning and capacity deployment.

The Spanish Presidency – by his admission – was able to deliver 144 initiatives out of 148. Prime Minister Zapatero refers on the launching of the Lisbon Treaty as the most important achievement as Spain was the first presidency in office since the Treaty has been in force during their period and he also mentions carrying out the necessary first economic recovery steps in terms of the crisis.

Spanish also helped Greece in the latter question and besides this they also participated in two influencing decisions on the 2020 Strategy in order to reinforce the compliance of the strategy and avoid probable issues for Lisbon Treaty.

The Spaniards are proud that they have founded the cornerstone of the European economic entity by operating the economic administration's mechanism in order to help the crisis-affected countries: max. 750 billion euro could be mobilised. (The outcome of the marketing results of the presidency might serve as model for future presidencies.)

The EU27 promised being more rigorous in the Stability and Growth Pact, and the Spanish acted firstly in the issue so as to apply sanction in this area. The objective of the new financial mechanism and regulations are to track every product and being capable to avoid regular risks.

The Spaniards encountered the increased transparency from the financial institutions as well. Till 2013, yet the EU has already begun to reduce the financial sector's crisis management assistance in a progressive manner.

From the above mentioned steps, it is important to highlight the Spanish initiative on publishing the result of the resistance level of the European bank sector which aimed to calm markets, reduce speculations and is to restore confidence in the interbank market. In addition, the Spaniards stood along to protect the eurozone and to strengthen the role and prestige of the ECB.

Concerning the third pillar, the Spaniards might have been too ambitious although they could achieve success in the security and freedom rights. As planned, some important contracts were signed with South America which is somewhat minimised the suspension of the EU-US summit (even if it succeeded in agreeing with the U.S. on the banking data exchange.)

In terms of the fight against terrorism, several important agreements were ratified (Swift Treaty) on the review of sharing the financial data. By signing the 'Open Sky' Convention with the U.S., such a common transatlantic aviation area was established where the 60% of the world's air transportation comes about.

Agreement reached at the end of the Presidency, although by a delay of 3-4 months, on the framework of the European External Action Service as well, which currently proposes post of the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary-General for 3-4 persons, such as the French Pierre Vimont, the Italian Stefano Sannio, the Polish Mikolaj Dowgielewicz and the German Helga Schmid seems to be candidates.

In addition to this, the Spaniards can be also proud of those agreements signed which reinforce the concept of equality such as support for the victims of sexual crimes: taking the first steps towards the creation of the 'European Observatory for Violence against Women'.

The EU's significant action plans towards the earthquakes of Haiti and Chile and the air traffic paralysed by the Icelandic ash cloud has been also stressed during this period albeit it is well known that neither the High Commissioner nor the mechanisms of the Lisbon Treaty have shown unsatisfying results on the crisis management.

Some planned summits were cancelled as well with the U.S.: Prime Minister Zapatero by discussing with the EU institutions brought decision to suspend the Mediterranean Union Summit for the new wave of the Middle East conflict in order to avoid any chance of a new EU diplomatic fiasco.

This was unlikely a reason to increase EU's diplomatic weight in the region whilst Zapatero since the appearance of French plans highlighted with specific examples also reported by experts concerning the non-conceptual and dysfunctional Mediterranean Union. For compensation, they set up a de facto dysfunctional Secretariat on 4th March 2010 in Barcelona.

Despite this, there has been some progress in the private sector as well (regarding especially the area of small business) in order to reduce the administrative burdens on the field

of EU Strategy for Homeland Security (25th February 2010), the expansion case of the EUNAVFOR Atalanta operation in Somalia.

The free trade negotiations with Peru and Bolivia reached their final stage and with Croatia two new chapters were opened. The EC welcomed Iceland's request, so the Council could start the accession negotiations. I. Morocco Summit was held.

The presidency also helped, inter alia, with the concept of the electric vehicles and the high-speed internet to spread and reformed the Structural Funds regulations. Erasmus Programme of the European Police education was created and the COSI, ie Home Affair Standing Committee was also set up.

The critics of the Spanish Presidency over the wailing of the suspended EU-US Summit raised awareness on the complete failure of initiatives of financial review of the speculative funds. The French Daniel Cohn-Bendit (Greens) added that 'essentially no one can see those developments of which we are told' since the opinion of the Greens any (serious) progress has been made for the EU2020 – Strategy for Growth and Employment.

At the end of the Spanish Presidency on 17-18th June 2010 the EU states and government leaders could learn the report of the Gonzalez Group. The Gonzalez Group (led by the former Spanish Prime Minister, Felipe Gonzalez) regarding the development of the EU 20 years ahead (2020-2030) prepared a report.

The Group has been created for the initiative of President Sarkozy in the second half of 2007 in spite of the opposition of several member states: the latter was concerned that French get their ambitions prevailed. Sarkozy's idea was due to the veto of Turkish accession based on 'the scientific-philosophical arguments of the Group', sharing responsibility of decision in respect.

Great Britain and the Eastern-European countries achieved that the mandate of the Group neither can be the enlargement nor concerning the EU-border extensions and that only issues on economic growth, competitiveness, social solidarity, rule of law, stability, immigration, demography, climate change and international terrorism may be discussed. However the report does not outline alternative solutions it is only a catalogue listing about the challenges of our time, which we already learnt from elsewhere, therefore it was a waste of energy.

From the 1st of July, Belgium took over the EU Presidency and hence the permanent president of the European Council is also Belgian (Herman Van Rompuy), the Belgian Presidency was given a serious hand in the management of the EU meanwhile paradoxically the country had to face its most serious secession crisis for the Flemish secessionist aspirations.

On the early parliamentary elections for the 13th June 2010, the independent party, the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) won a landslide victory, namely, in Flemish land first won a party whose declared, long-term aim is to separate Belgium.

In the beginning of the presidency, the current executive Prime Minister (Yves Leterme) was in office and until editing our study, agreement has not been made on forming the coalition between the parties (NV-A, Flemish and Walloon Socialists, Christian Democrats and Greens) and Elio Di Rupo, prime minister candidate. Hence it is probable that the upcoming Hungarian Presidency will have a 'salvage role' as well.

Although the Belgians stated before the time that they would not use the advantage of Herman Van Rompuy and would also not be influenced by him, however, the President of the European Council might have to intervene to the presidency of its own country at a great extent...

III. The Hungarian EU Presidency

Accomplishing the task of EU Presidency means a serious political and logistical challenge for an older, more experienced and larger member state as well. The Hungarian preparation was influenced by parliamentary elections and many had concerns on the continuity of the preparation.

The codification work as part of the preparation period started in 2007 and the first concrete step on preparation was the creation of the Preparatory Commission for the EU Presidency on 26th June 2006. According to the Hungarian Government 2079/2007 (V.11.) the foreign affairs minister with the collaboration of other ministers concerned is in charge of the central control for the preparation. The most significant action of the preparation schedule, Hungary had to be ready for 2010 in order to join the trio's presidential work.

Regarding the human resources the first step focused on identifying the functions for the presidency. Between 2007 -2008, the complete selection of the president of the council working group of 250, the selection of staff of coordination was ended. In November of 2008, a comprehensive training programme (language knowledge, skill improvement, basic and functional training on the EU) commenced for the selected 600 personnel, who for the beginning of 2010, was completely prepared for its role.

The Hungarian Presidency takes over the presidency in a busy year when the revision of the Lisbon Treaty and the first debate on the new budget plan is scheduled. In practice it means that the Commission is expected to outline its proposal regarding the new budget and the common policies for the end of 2010. Past experience has shown that the period following the referral of the proposal, the national interests can be revealed and should be coordinated by the country holding the EU Presidency.

Under the period of the Hungarian Presidency two anticipated summit with the participation of all head of governments and states will be held in Brussels but in exceptional cases, the central administration must be capable and prepared for receiving and organising of such high-level events and logistics with the most proper infrastructure.

According to the proposal of July 2009, the Hungarian budget for the presidency in 2010 is 9 billion while in 2011 it is 17 billion forints (96,3 million Euros in total, 270 HUF = 1 EUR) from which the administration cost is estimated 60 million Euro and the presidency promoting internal/external communication campaigns also kick another huge amount.

The budget allocation, inter alia provides thus the cost of events, the reported additional and communicational costs of the Permanent Representation in Brussels and the accompanying cultural event costs. During the Hungarian Presidency, 150 ministerial meeting will be held in Budapest, as well as 50 informal, so-called associated events and also dozens of professional and scientific conference are expected. In Brussels more than 2000 meetings will be held for the Hungarian professionals and officials. The background of the so-called regulation for sponsoring subsidies has been worked out and the preliminary calculations of the government account an amount between 3-5 billion Forint.

The first Hungarian step on 26th June 2007 was to set up the Hungarian EU Presidency Preparatory Committee which became in charge of the definition and coordination tasks regarding the preparation. The leader of the body is the prime minister and its members are the state secretaries of ministry of foreign affairs, judicial, financial, social and human resources.

The role of committee secretariat services held by Gabor Ivan from the Foreign Ministry (since September of 2010 his successor is Peter Gyorkos and Eniko Gyori State Secretary of EU affairs is also welcoming an important position). The inter-ministerial professional coordination on tasks regarding the preparation is managed by the European Coordination Inter-Ministerial Committee. The 2249/2007. (XII.23.) Government Decree of the committee disposes of the human resource tasks regarding the preparation and the person in charge is the current minister of the Prime Minister's Office and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The key policy objective of the Hungarian EU Presidency is to make the EU adopt the Danube Region Strategy, namely the expansion of the Schengen zone and will be prepared for the end of the presidency. The Strategy, after the Baltic Sea Strategy, can become the second transnational, macro regional and regional developing strategy and its adaptation suits well those presidential objectives which are in favour of the water appearing as central element in the presidency programme.

The success is in our ability in compromise-building so as what we provide in return for the support in the Strategy or package deals to such countries which are not essentially interested in its creation (eg.: member states of the Baltic Sea Strategy and Mediterranean Union) but are expected to support and not to oppose. On one hand the aim of this is whether we can represent and focus on other countries' interests and on the other hand, the Strategy has to be ratified till the summit of June 2010. The role of the Hungarians will be the revision and renewal preparation of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, the kick-off of negotiations on the post-2010 biodiversity protecting strategy implementation, the evaluation of the 6th Environmental Action Plan and the establishment of the 7th Environmental Action Plan. In 2012, the EC plans to introduce a new comprehensive water policy document ('Blue-print for the EU's waters') which preparation is the task of the Hungarian Presidency.

Another 2011s goal is to strengthen the Eastern Partnership. In Hungary the Eastern Partnership Summit held in 2011 will be a key event of heads of states and governments. The above mentioned agenda, of course has to be supplemented with national priorities as well. According to another possible idea in the framework of the EU neighbourhood policy is the establishment of the Czech-Hungarian-Polish bridge which could also serve as a counterbalance of the EU-members recalling importance of Mediterranean countries.

By the cooperation of the Visegrad countries on Eastern neighbourhood development proactive relations could be established with Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, and Georgia and at the same time this plan might be opposed by Spain although Hungary expects strong support from the upcoming Polish-Danish-Cyprus trio.

During negotiations, the energy policy has been particularly emphasised since the commence of liberalisation occurring during our trio in office therefore Hungary considers active participation in the preparation and implementation of the decision of the energy policy EU-summit on 4th February 2011.

In relation to the budget framework some conflicts occurred in the trio as being the last joined member of the trio, Hungary is interested in the post-2013 community supports whilst in the contrary, the two other members have completely different situations: Belgium, as an EU-founder state do not share the community policies such as Spain after attained growth is no longer interested either.

The members of the trio also agreed on continuing the preparatory meetings on a monthly basis and the trio also commence the preparation of the operational program which stresses the detailed action plan and the presidential agenda was to be completely realised for November 2009.

The Hungarian Presidency expects Croatia accession for 2011 albeit this plan is strongly influenced by the consensus with Slovenians (border conflicts) and the tendencies towards the Turkish accession.

In this period, the decision on Romania and Bulgaria's accession to the Schengen zone is due though because of the gipsy issues some members feel forced to give opinion.

However both countries are considered as troublesome for corruption and judicial reforms yet 2010 seems a feasible date. In order to handle these questions, the proper preparation is a key element. Furthermore, the Hungarian Presidency is concerned that an extensive cooperation between the EU and Serbia and Ukraine gets deeper for the case of the Hungarian minority population beyond Hungarian borders.

Summary and conclusions

About the domestic relations in respect of the preparations for the EU Presidency, generally speaking the older the member state the stronger the consent is among the government and its opposition or at least they pretend consent to the public in order that the country benefits from the possibilities. Among the new countries, Slovenia has successfully solved the similar matters and also succeeded to avoid the results achieved in European affairs during its parliamentary election campaign even if the government failed after the EU-elections.

However the negative example is the Czech Republic (could easily be Belgium as well), where the EU Presidency became subordinated and even debuted as lame duck for the delicate domestic political situation which peaked in the failure of the government in April.

By this negative result, the EU was forced to 'turn autopilot' whilst in terms of the economic crisis because of its competitors, China and India, fast, specific and coordinated joint European actions would have been necessary to fulfil. The more powerful French President also had difficulties to make the proper decision. In Hungary, at first the five-party and after the government shift, four-party negotiations seems to have created a consultation, established that national minimum which Hungary can expect the international outcome of the action for the unit by..

1. Table: Assessment of the framework for the EU presidential preparatory periods and budget in period 2008-2011

	Presidential period	Beg. of preparation	Budget	PR-costs
Slovenian Presidency	2008/1	2005 (approx. 3yrs)	62 million €	N/A
French Presidency	2008/2	summer 2007 (approx. 1yr)	190 million €	15 million €
Czech Presidency	2009/1	January 2007 (approx. 2yr)	124,5 million €	10,4 million €
Swedish Presidency	2009/2	autumn 2007 (approx. 2yrs)	80,1 million €	65 million €
Spanish Presidency	2010/1	autumn 2008 (approx. 1,5yrs)	83 million € (+ preparatory costs 23 m. €)	approx. 5,2 million €
Belgian Presidency	2010/2	May 2008 (approx. 2,5yrs)	90 million €	N/A
Hungarian Presidency	2011/1	beg. 2007 (approx. 4yrs)	(96,3>) 80 million €	N/A
Polish Presidency	2011/2	2008 (approx. 3yrs)	102,9 million €	N/A

By András István Türke, Dr.

In terms of the preparatory period on one hand we can say that the experienced member states relatively late (approx. 1-2 years) whilst the new member states starts the concrete preparations earlier (average 3-4 years) although the recent trio-system forced the countries to commence the negotiations on common goals before such as well the number of those dossiers are important which are devolved upon them from the previous states and went through on several trios (Lisbon Treaty, climate and energy policies).

However it should be pointed out that the analysis of the intensity and processes at different levels of the preparation is extremely complex and above a certain level it is impossible to complete so it is probable that a country starts the preparation early but the substantive steps come later. For example the Swedish Presidency officially began its preparation 2 years before although its tangible results, priorities and programme was declared

much later. Regarding the preparations, Hungary is in an appropriate stage comparing to previous examples and is progressing at a satisfactory pace.

2. Table: Assessment of the presidential structures

	Existing, stable institutions and/or main coordinator(s)	Separately established, provisional institutions and/or main coordinator(s)
Slovenian Presidency 2008/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State Secretary Janez Lenarcic (Government Office for European Affairs) - Ministry of Foreign Affairs - EU Permanent Representation - CWG (Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Minister of Public Administration Managing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CWG (Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Foreign Minister, Minister of Public Administration Managing) - Operational and Project Groups
French Presidency 2008/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SGAE (General Secretariat for European Affairs) - Secretary of State for European Affairs, Jean-Pierre Jouyet - Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner - Gilles Briatta: advisor to the Prime Minister for European Affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - „PFUE Cell” (Florence Ferrari) - Pierre Heilbronn: PFUE coordinator - SGPFUE: Claude Blanchemaison – Secretary-General for French EU-Presidency
Czech Presidency 2009/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government Secretary and then Prime Minister - Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister: EU Affairs Deputy Minister (Alexandr Vondra then Jan Kohut) 	
Swedish Presidency 2009/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cecilia Malmström: Ministry of European Affairs - Prime Minister Frederik Reinfeldt: Prime Minister's Office - Foreign Minister Carl Bildt 	COM-09: Kristina Zetterström
Spanish Presidency 2010/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foreign Minister and Cooperation Miguel Angel Moratinos - EU State Secretary Diego López, N/A 	N/A
Belgian Presidency 2010/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secretary of State Olivier Chastel - Foreign Minister then Prime Minister Yves Leterme 	N/A
Hungarian Presidency 2011/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foreign Minister Péter Balázs then János Martonyi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EU-Presidency Preparatory Committee (Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Justice Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Social Affairs State Secretary); State Secretary Gábor Iván - Jenő Faller: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Head of Finance and Economic Dept. for EU Presidency Preparatory, State Secretary - Ministry of Foreign Affairs, EU Coordination and Legal Affairs Dept., Gabor Ivan State Secretary and Head of European Affairs
Polish Presidency 2011/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prime Ministers/Council of Ministers - Council of Ministers of the European Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government Representative for the EU-Presidency Preparation of the Public Administration Bodies - Budget ~, Logistics and Security ~, Promotional and Cultural ~, Human Resources Consulting and Advisor Group

By András István Törke, Dr.

In terms of the organisational structure we meet the most various forms. In some countries the High Commissioner is in the leading role and there are others countries where the yet existing bodies are entrusted with this task and elsewhere there are new institutions established in addition (mainly in France).

Regarding the priorities, in principle, the Member States are devolved upon previous presidencies and on the other hand priorities are developed in respect to national interests and compromises among members of trios. Besides the traditional consultation, the French

President made a vain attempt with concluding a political pact with the Czech in order to reinforce the success of its priorities. Albeit the French national interests in many areas, however, encountered serious oppositions, with other countries' national interests such as the resistance against the accession of Turkey and paralysing the enlargement process or the protectionism used as means for dealing with the economic crisis and as well its relationship with The ECB.

3. Table: Shared priorities and breakpoints of the Presidencies and trios in terms of the prior presidential objectives and world politics

	Main topics/events	Main topics: in-trio conflicts	+ national interests
German Presidency	- Lisbon Treaty - expansion of Schengen	- acceleration of Croatia accession	- avoiding to decrease the catering tax - denial Mediterranean Union (extra cost)
Portuguese Presidency	- case of Kosovo - energy policy and climate protection		
Slovenian Presidency		- paralysing accession of Croatia	- paralysing Croatia accession (for Piran Bay)
French Presidency	- climate and energy policy - immigration - Mediterranean Union - ESDP/CFSP - mgmt of financial crisis	- denial of Turkish accession - slowing down enlargement - forcing Mediterranean Union - European solution for Georgian issue - „Pan-European” crisis mgmt, protectionism - acceleration of common climate policy	- decreasing catering tax - e-tax reform
Czech Presidency		- acceleration of enlargement process - denial to Mediterranean Union - Georgia issue US-solution - „nationwide crisis mgmt”, denial to protectionism	- „less EU, more US” - common climate policy slowing down (for developed Eastern Europe)
Swedish Presidency		- Turkish accession (goal : project Nabucco breakthrough) - denial to Mediterranean Union - „liberal crisis mgmt”, denial to protectionism - common climate policy	- Baltic Sea Strategy
Spanish Presidency	- financial and economic crisis mgmt - climate and energy policy	- supporting Mediterranean Union, denying Eastern Partnership - supporting Turkish accession	- Lisbon Treaty - CAP - water use
Belgian Presidency	- Lisbon Treaty - EU as global actor (common logo and flag)	- denial of Mediterranean Union - denial of Turkish accession	- African politics
Hungarian Presidency		- denial of Mediterranean Union (financial deprivation from Eastern regions), rather V4 and Czech-Hun-Polish bridge (Eastern-European Union?)	- Western-Balkan (Serbian accession) - Eastern Partnership - minority policy
Polish Presidency	- common interest: sea policy	- instead of Mediterranean Union, rather eastern Partnership or Baltic Sea Plan	
Danish Presidency			
Cyprian Presidency			- denial of Turkish accession

By András István Türke, Dr.

Nonetheless grave discussions have been evolved around unexpected events (Georgian conflict, economic crisis, etc.); as far as it was possible, major European dossiers have been delayed or postponed (case of the Lisbon Treaty) or had a compromise solution (cli-

mate pact) by the member countries in presidential office. Basically regarding the EU Presidency this implies jeopardy as none of the presidencies are pleased to overtake the unpopular or risky issues and tries to pass on its solution (eg.: The French EU Presidency passed the ratification issues of Lisbon Treaty on the Czech which passed it on the Swedish Presidency so far).

The Mediterranean Union is such a case that EU is struggling with and is an issue passed on from trios to trios as besides France and Spain, no other member country is overly enthusiastic about it. (Besides this it must be mentioned that during the Spanish Presidency the MU summit has been cancelled.) The Mediterranean Union has to tackle now with the Baltic Sea Plan (Swedes, Danes, Poles) and the Eastern-European Union plan (Czechs, Hungarians, Poles). The question is obviously about which region should be supported from the limited EU-budget.

In addition to this, the political ambitions of the 'large countries', like of France, Poland, came into the spotlight against which Germany who assumes the largest from the EU-budget (nowadays France), neither financially nor politically is interested. Similar problem appears in terms of the Croatian accession which was supported by these member states in study for a shorter or longer period, however, Slovenia brought on a deadlock similar to the Greek-Macedonian dispute and neither it shows interest in accelerating the Croatian accession whilst nor can validate its national interests.

By the enforcement of national interests, concerning the global political context of some presidencies, and besides repeating its details, only the most well-known regularities can be confirmed. First as the larger states can validate their priorities with far more success in contrary to the smaller states (eg.: Czech Republic), who can only occasionally rely on the manoeuvring skills of their diplomats (eg.: Slovenia).

Secondly, the stress shift on the neighbourhood policy achievements is systematically attached to the geographical determination (see Mediterranean cooperation vs. Eastern-EU Partnership).

As third, in terms of shaping the unexpected world political events, the non-EU countries on their own, independently of the EU, seek the opportunities for cooperation and negotiation only with the considerable classic superpowers, regardless the current EU Presidency (see Georgian conflict).

All in all we must conclude that in all cases, the Hungarian EU Presidency should slow down the Turkish accession and ask for impact assessment instead of the automatic takeover of the US opinion on it, or at least avoiding giving any specific stance. Hungary should accelerate the accession of Croatia and should work out proposals for conciliations respectively though as being biased may not be the best mediator between Slovenes and Croats.

However, it would be unfortunate to get involved in the struggle of regions, and even having campaigns for the Eastern Partnership and the Baltic Sea cooperation is only practical if as agreed with the partners and shows adequate flexibility as the willingness for compromise towards the Eastern plans was in an imperfect way but manifested in the Sarkozy-Topolánek Pact as well.

The Hungarian EU Presidency instead of incitement of hostilities, organising and strengthening rallies should play a bridge role this time in which its small-state existence is an advantage as no concerns worthy for the subsistence of the 'hidden goals of the super-powers' like in the case of France or Poland. However, those traditionally attached topics to Hungary such as the minority politics with good marketing could also generate severe EU-attention since the natural consequences of economic recession are usually internal conflicts and as considering the dozens of the strengthening EU-conflicts, not yet successfully and long-term settled, can entail serious threats in the aspect of the integrity of the EU in general..

EUROPA VARIETAS INSTITUTE

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EuVI Analyses | ISSN : 2061-9812 | **Publisher** : Europa Varietas Foundation – 1135
Budapest (Hungary), Szent László út 15. 5. em. 8. | **Editor-in-Chief** : András István Törke
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