

First Time Hungarian EU Presidency

LIA PAJTÁS

The third session of the conference,¹ what was organised at the Central European University, entertained the social and political context of the presidencies. In this session there were two facilitators: *Jari Vilén*, ambassador of the Embassy of Finland to Hungary from 2007, whose discourse title was 'Ten Lessons to be Learned for a Successful EU Presidency'²; and *Uwe Puetter*, professor at the Department of Public Policy of the Central European University.

Kulcsszavak: EU Presidency, governing policy, a miniszterek képzése, the budget.

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The EU Presidency is always different from the expectations were. It is a fundamental thing, what has to be before the eyes, that the EU Presidency is a chance once in a life-time. For Hungary, from the joining to the EU in 2004, this is the first chance to represent the country in the EU by the EU Presidency. This is a unique opportunity for Hungary to put to spotline Hungary and the Hungarians. This Presidency will be very important, because the public image, what will grow up in the EU-27, and it is very important for the country's future: Hungary and the Hungarian people will known by the 'pálinka', the 'Jobbik', the sausage or by active EU membership. This later is the goal what the Hungarian governance has to communicate, beyond the country's culture, history, economy, etc. But, between the objects, there has to be that governing policy which will bring the EU closer to the citizens.

The Hungarian governance has to learn from other similar countries' case, like the Presidency of Finland. These two countries are very similar if we think about the geographical and demografical measures of the two countries. We can say that Finland learnt yet from the EU Presidency, and now, they are active part of the EU.

For a successful EU Presidency the Hungarian governance has to collect some of the experiences of other countries. There are some eternal verities which can be very useful for the Hungarians.

First of all Hungary has to respect *the budget*. Everything is always underbudgeted. During the Presidency, there will be many unexpected or underbudgeted costs, for example the security of the Presidencies. The government does not calculate with it, but at the end there will be a huge cost of it. But – and this is true too –, from the end of the Presidency a lot of money would return, if the Presidency was successful and efficient.

The second thing is *the transparency*. An EU Presidency has to be transparent. It is very important that all the officials who take part of the Presidency and its work have to be available every time, all day and all night. Availing Himself of the Finnish Ambassador's example: 'It was two weeks to get the coordinator's phone number. So it was two weeks while we had to work without him!' So, be available 24 hours of 24 hours! It is very illuminating that all the cellphone numbers of all officials have to be present on the Internet. It is obligatory! Without answered and returned calls the EU Presidency cannot work.

¹ First Time Hungarian EU Presidency, First Time in a Trio Workshop, 29-30 October 2010, Budapest.

² Finland's six-month EU Presidency began on 1 July 2006 and ended 31 December 2006, when the baton was passed on to Germany.

The third thing is *the training for Ministers*. Unfortunately, the Ministers are not selected by the real knowledge, but by the regional or general votes of citizens and by the decision of the Prime Minister.

First of all the Ministers have to know languages. The two most important languages are the English and the French, the diplomacy's language, what have to talk fluently, and now the emphasis is on the word 'fluently'. They can make messages only this way, they can reach their object using these two languages which are the key of the success. Unfortunately, many politicians go to language course only before the EU Presidency, and they are waiting success from it. But, that's true, six-months are not enough to learn a language to use it sophisticatedly.

Beyond the language training, Ministers have to participate on other trainings too. For example they have to learn how they can learn from the EU Presidency, how to use the rules, how to make good decisions quickly, and so on. Ministers have to know all the EU's players and institutions, and they have to know exactly the EU's procedures.

The fourth thing is *the right choice*. A mainly thing that the right people has to be in the right spot in the right time. At the EU Presidency has to be chosen ministers, officers, who can work, who have a lot-of-years experience. The rule of the ministers is not just to govern the administration, but the making decisions.

An other important thing to be successful is that Ministers have to do work between meetings. Unfortunately, this is the point which Hungarians have to learn very quickly – many years' experience shows that Hungarians do not work between meetings.

In the following there are the ten lessons to be learnt by the Hungarian governance for the EU Presidency:

1. Be in tune with the commission: this will be one of the most important work of the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán.
2. Get to know the European Parliament: this is that EU's organ which has to most important rule in the EU Presidency's life, this is the crucial partner.
3. Learn from previous Presidencies: Hungary has to concentrate on this very much.
4. Ensure international communication.
5. Choose your priorities: without priorities the EU Presidency cannot work; there will be always newer and newer problems, but at the end, without priorities, neither of them will be solved.
6. Go public – inform – be transparent: beyond transparency the connection with the citizens is very important; the citizens have to be involved to the EU Presidency's work (for example, during the EU Presidency 133 meetings with the citizens were realised in Finland).
7. Act swiftly: quick, but good decisions have to be made.
8. Lead: use the power of Presidency, it is a once time chance to the country.
9. Prepare for the unexpected: there is always something unexpected, a catastrophe, an economic crisis, environmental catastrophe, etc.
10. Enjoy the Presidency while you do it and stay healthy!

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<http://www.southeast-europe.org>
dke@southeast-europe.org

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Thank you for your kind collaboration. *Editor-in-Chief*