

PRIORITIES OF THE POLISH EU PRESIDENCY IN THE RUSSIAN PRESS

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ABSTRACT

In the 1st of July 2011 Poland has become the president of the Council of the European Union for the first time since it joined the EU. *Growth, security and openness* – Polish are building their presidency on these words. Under the term growth they would continue the work started by the Hungarian presidency, such as the acceptance of the economic governance package, with its help realizing a tighter economic integration. Forming the 2014-2020 budget plan is also a priority, like the further deepening of the EU's internal market. Under the framework of security Polish would further strengthen energy, food and military security. Openness stands for putting bigger emphasize on accession negotiations with candidate countries, promoting Romania's and Bulgaria's accession negotiations to the Schengen zone, and the strengthening of the EU's Neighborhood Policy, and expanding it both to the South and to the East.

*Keywords:* Polish EU Presidency, Eastern Partnership Conference, International Solidarity Fund, Russian press.

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In Russia the three most popular daily newspapers are the *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the *Moskovski Komsomolets* and the *Argumenti i fakti*. These dailies are rather entertaining, light toned newspapers. More serious ones are the *Vedomosti*, *Kommersant* and *Izvestiya*. *Vedomosti* is published by the Independent Media publishing house, and it was created as a counterpart of the Wall Street Journal and Financial Times. In Russia it is considered to be the less influenced newspaper by internal political and business interests. Its daily circulation is about 75 000 pieces.<sup>1</sup> The liberal *Kommersant* is one of the oldest business newspapers of the Russian press, it was founded in the 1980's, and its English version is also available on the internet. At the moment it is Russia's leading business newspaper, its daily circulation is around 87 000.<sup>2</sup> *Izvestiya* is also very similar to *Kommersant*, but while *Izvestiya* is popular between wide layers of society, *Kommersant* is read by business circles. The *Izvestiya* once was the best selling Russian newspaper, nowadays its daily circulation is around 371 000.<sup>3</sup> Among English written newspapers the most popular one is the *Moscow Times*. The *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* occupies a prominent place between the exigent Russian newspapers, its target audience encompasses educated and politically active layers of the society. Although its daily circulation remains low, but between politicians, business people and academics it is considered as a prestigious platform with a 70 000 daily circulation in Moscow.<sup>4</sup> *Rossiskaya Gazeta* is the main newspaper owned by the government, and it is entitled to publish newly adopted laws. Despite its affiliation to the government, critics concerning the actual governments are also in the newspaper, its daily circulation is around 683 000.<sup>5</sup> For writing my summery I used daily and weekly newspapers and single publications.

The Russian press gave relatively high attention to the priorities of the Polish presidency, almost all of the daily and weekly newspapers published articles about its opening ceremony, proposed goals and about its Eastern Partnership Program. „Donald Tusk, Poland's prime minister presented its country's presidency priorities – states the *Regnum*. Poland's priorities can be divided into three main groups, the European integration as the source of growth, including deepening of the single market, completing the unification of the patent system and further developing of the EU's cohesion policy. A safer Europe, including itself food, energy and military security. As *Donald Tusk* said military security can be better achieved by developing a more efficient cooperation between the NATO and the EU. Strengthening economic governance, the reform of the common agricultural policy, exploitation of the benefits of Europe's openness, developing free trade

<sup>1</sup> [www.prosmi.ru/catalog/145](http://www.prosmi.ru/catalog/145), 2011.09.06.

<sup>2</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4315129.stm>, 2011.09.06.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

zones with the countries of the Eastern Partnership Program and the Mediterranean Union, supporting and promoting democratic transition in Northern Africa and in the Middle East with the help of creating the *International Solidarity Fund*. Poland also hopes for concluding Croatia's accession, and making further steps in Serbia's accession negotiations.

The Polish give to their presidency a huge importance, Poland wants to strengthen its image of being a well-organized, modern and dynamic country, which is able to make such decisions that are beneficial for all the European citizens – writes the *Rossiskaya Gazeta*.<sup>6</sup> Donald Tusk while setting out the priorities for his country emphasized that Poland needs to become the new driving force of the European Union – writes the *Pravda.ru*. The prime minister also hopes that the presidency will enable its country to strengthen its party's internal political place, which is particularly important from the point of the upcoming parliamentary elections. In the opinion of experts Tusk's government has the chance to strengthen its position thanks to the Polish presidency both internationally and internally. Poland is seeking to position itself as an influential leader of the region during its half year presidency. Only one thing could hinder this, the upcoming elections in October which expected to be especially stressful, because of the tension between the actual government and the opposition party. Tusk in his speech called upon all parties to refrain from criticizing each other sharply before the elections, not to harm Poland's reputation as the president of the EU – as we can read in the article of *RIA news agency*.<sup>7</sup> Also drafting the 2014-2020 budget plan is going to take place during the Polish presidency. *Mikolaj Dovgelevich* the Polish Secretary of State for EU affairs explained, that Poland is one of the biggest beneficiary of the opportunities offered by the EU, but in the upcoming budget debate he is allowed to participate only as an arbiter yet. The discussion of the budget plan will likely to be extended beyond the year of 2011 and continues also in 2012, thus they have to wait until then to represent effectively the Polish interests – writes a single edition of *Rossiskaya Gazeta*.

The *Eastern Partnership Conference* that appeared also in the Hungarian press will be organized finally during the Polish presidency, and Poland attaches great importance to it. „Poland would like to see Moldova as a successful story of the European Union” – states the *Regnum*. In Poland's opinion the Moldovan Republic must become a key element in order to have a stable and reliable EU neighborhood policy. Moldova at the moment is very successful in implementing reforms required by the neighborhood policy, however in order to become a success story it still has a long way to go and continue the well-started reforms. The Eastern Partnership Program is a promising historic opportunity for both the EU and countries participating in it, namely Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova. The countries participating are getting the opportunity to form a close economic and political integration with the EU, in exchange the EU can expect a stable and developing neighborhood, which is an inevitable prerequisite for its own economic growth. The basis of cooperation are such values as freedom, democracy, the rule of law and the appreciation of human rights. The *pravda.ru* electronic journal published an interview made with *Bogdan Bezpalko* a history professor of Moscow State University about Poland's Eastern Partnership plans. The professor at the beginning was asked about that in his opinion are the Polish seeking to develop any influence on the eastern parts of Europe through the Eastern Partnership Program. Bezpalko explained that Poland historically considers the area of Ukraine and Belarus within the sphere of his influence; nevertheless the Polish would like to form Eastern Europe into one of the most important region of the EU. „The Polish demanded to gain a leading position in the region and they would like to realize their plan in the framework of their presidency.” What Ukraine and Belarus says to Poland's ambition, the professor said the following: „...nowadays Russia puts huge pressure on Belarus, therefore it is possible that the Byelorussians in the end will evolve finally towards the European Union. Lukashenko also said that next to their cooperation with Russia at the same time their priority is to maintain good relations with the West.” Looking at the case of Ukraine establishing special relationship with Poland and the EU is a priority. To the question, that why Poland left out Russia from his Eastern Partnership plans Bezpalko said the following: „Even though the entire plan is not aimed against Russia but it is fully neglecting Russia's vital interests.” The Polish are trying to look at Russia as not a significant power between Europe and Eurasia, and still considering it as their geopolitical rival. After Bezpalko was asked on the International Solidarity Fund proposed by the Polish presidency and about the promotion of democratization in Northern African countries. Poland during its presidency set out its objective on creating the International Solidarity Fund which seeks to promote democratic transition around the world, ultimately in the Union's close neighborhood, in the Northern African region. The professor had the following opinion on the question: „...since Poland is the most loyal partner of the United States between the Eastern European countries, therefore by supporting the democratic transitions in Northern Africa he is demonstrating and cultivating this special relationship.” In the end the incidental deterioration of the EU-Russian relations has been discussed. In the opinion of Bezpalko there is a

<sup>6</sup> Ариадна Рокоссовская: Председательство в ЕС перешло к Польше, 2011.07.01.

<sup>7</sup> Анна Чернова: Польша принимает председательство в ЕС от Венгрии, 2011.07.01.

chance that the Polish presidency would generate a slight tension in the EU-Russia relations since „the Polish could try to transfer their negative, at least cautious perception into a European level but breakdown or heavy deterioration is not expected.”

Over the next six month a difficult period is waiting for the Polish EU presidency. Solving the euro-zone crisis, preparing the long-term budget plan, common market, common defense and security policy, energy security and the widening of the EU towards the southern and eastern neighbors – said *Jerzy Buzek* the head of the European Parliament. He also pointed out that during the Polish presidency the Polish are leading the main European institutions, the Council of the European Union and the Parliament, and the two institutions are giving 90% of the EU legislations. Perhaps the greatest challenge of the Polish Presidency is the crisis of the euro-zone. „It is important for Poland that Europe survives this current troubled period; despite the fact that Poland is not the member of the eurozone, it will need to address the problem and care about saving the euro” – quotes the *Rossiskaya Gazeta*. Furthermore Poland considers as its mission to increase Europe’s sensitivity towards his Eastern neighbors, and to envisage the free trade agreement between EU and Ukraine. According to Polish leadership, despite the fact that whole Europe is struggling with economic difficulties the EU should grow further, especially towards East. Nevertheless the Polish hope that they will be able to transfer their euro-optimism to the other Member States as well.

We could find articles in several newspapers on Ukraine’s future. In the beginning the Polish had high hopes for Eastern Partnership Conference hoping that they will succeed to sign the Association Agreement with Ukraine. However, by now it has become clear that this will not take place. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, *Radoslav Sikorski* said that at this stage of the negotiations the Agreement will not be concluded. He stressed out that although there are some countries including Poland which would like to see Poland as soon as possible as an associate country, but the majority of the Member States are still against Ukraine’s associate partnership. „Ukraine still needs a long and difficult way to go, implementing democratic institutions and the European standard in order to gain all the 27 Member States’ trust and consent for taking the next step” – writes *Pravda*.

„We can finally say that now for the fourth time a country from the former Eastern bloc is chairing Europe after Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary – states *the bbc.ru*. *Komorowski* on the opening ceremony of his country’s presidency emphasized that exactly 20 years ago on the 1st of June 1991 the dissolution of Warsaw Pact was announced, and now 20 years later the Polish EU presidency is taking place. The way from the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact to the Polish EU presidency is showing the hard work and commitment of the Polish towards Europe and development.

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