

## POLISH PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL

- in the Greek Press -

ΧΑΡΙΚΛΕΙΑ ΚΟΚΚΙΝΟΥ ΜΑΝΔΑΜΑΔΙΩΤΟΥ

In this article I would like to show how the Greek newspapers reacted to the fact of Poland taking over the presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The truth, therefore, lies in the fact that, while Greece was into a political and economic turmoil and decline, the Greek newspapers had not any interest in Poland's EU presidency and the assumption of the European Council. At that time, our country experienced a governmental reorganization and immediately after that the new government scheme announced drastic measures that intended to contribute to the proper response of the country's obligations towards the IMF as well as to support the economy. That fact however caused many reactions and a set of rebellions started ...

So in that confusion, only the Greek newspapers, *Eleftherotypia* and *Ethnos* devoted one of their pages to pronounce the commitment of the European Council of Poland. However this did not go unnoticed by the Greek BLOGS. Nevertheless, the newspaper and the Greek blogs said: "Poland, the largest former communist country joined the European Union in 2004, took over on the 1st July 2011 the alternating chairmanship of the European Council, after Hungary.

The country will face many challenges; some of them are indeed difficult negotiations on the next long-term EU budget, which will start as of Poland's presidency.

Certainly she never forgets its priorities, including the strengthening of the euro zone, which enhances the prosperity in Europe, the enlargement of the EU through the integration of Western Balkan countries, the restoration of the confidence in European institutions and the creation of a good relationship with its European neighbors to the south and east. "Poland has the ambition to take away the psychological problems that Europe is experiencing now. In times of crisis, the worst thing that we can do is to renationalise our policy ... Europe today needs a common action, more cooperation and more integration. We want to restore confidence in the collaborative works.(...) Poland will try to bring back in Europe the belief in itself, to rekindle the spark of trust.", said the country's Minister of Foreign Affairs *Radoslaw Sikorski*. Also in the Polish presidency, priorities are to complete the accession process of Croatia, to open the accession negotiations for Serbia, to ensure the trade agreement with Ukraine and to promote a closer cooperation on military and energy sectors.

Of course Poland knowing of first hand, what does an economic crisis mean, and having managed to have an annual growth rate of 3.5%, will seek to spur economic growth as the 27 member countries of the EU are experiencing financial crisis in Greece and in other EU countries.

Indeed, the Polish Prime Minister *Donald Tusk* recalls in an interview with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, that Poland 20 years ago was in a worse position than Greece is now: '*We must help Papandreou*' said he and stressed the need to show solidarity with Greece. Additionally, with the help of Europe managed his own country to implement more drastic reforms. After the change of regime in 1989, he said, Poland was coping with a huge debt and a galloping inflation.

However it is worth to note that the Poles are in favor of European integration and that 80% of the people regard their participation in European institutions positively.

Prime Minister Poland Donald Tusk, according to analysts, is hoping that the presidency will strengthen him and his party to retain power after the October elections, which will be in the middle of the EU Presidency, and some commentators argue that the campaign can disorient the prime minister and his ministers from facing the problems of the European Union during this difficult period. The polls, however, give the ruling centrist party strong lead over its main rival, making it impossible to be replaced in power.

Poland, ultimately, seeks to emerge as a modern member-country of the EU, which, since joining the European Union, along with seven other former communist countries in 2004, achieved a strong financial growth avoiding even the downturn during the global economic crisis in 2008-2009. Nevertheless, major challenges faced by the EU will experience to the utmost the optimism and the ingenuity of the country in the coming months.”

(Sources: Press 1/7/2011: Ελευθεροτυπία (Eleftherotypia), Ethnos (Εθνος); Blogs 1/7/2011: Almyrosinfo.blogspot.com, Rodiaki, Kalimera.gr, enet.gr, exomatiakavlepo.blogspot.com, inout.gr, newpost.gr, onair24.gr, skai.gr.)

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