



Asociace  
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# Newsletter

## European program

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A Bi-monthly Review of European Affairs from the Czech Perspective

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#### Mini-analyses

##### **Constitutional Court Gives Lisbon Treaty Green Light**

Sylvie Milerová, Karel Ulík

15:0 ratio in favour of the accordance of the Lisbon Treaty (LT) with the Czech constitutional order – this is how the judges of the Constitutional Court decided in their finding from 26 November 2008. This decision which will enable the ratification process in the CR to continue was widely anticipated. The Greens and other members of the Parliament hope that the Parliament will ratify the Treaty before the end of this year according to the original plan.

In what concerns our presidency the situation has a rather symbolic character – the situation in Ireland is still unresolved. However ratification by the Parliament does not mean an end to the ratification process in the CR. In this case the chambers merely express their agreement with the ratification of an international treaty (article 39 of the Constitution), the ratification itself is finalised by the president's signature. Václav Klaus has declared that he would sign the LT only after it is ratified in Ireland. The Constitutional Court might affect the situation again. It only judged those articles that the Senate asked it to judge in its proposal. Therefore another request of review cannot be ruled out – under conditions set by section 71a of the Constitutional Court Bill, a group of members of parliament, senators or the president have the right to ask for it.

And how does Europe see the decision of the Czech Constitutional Court? Positively. The news from Brno seem like if someone "Xeroxed" them. The articles in both French Le Figaro and German Süddeutsche Zeitung agree that LT has cleared another obstacle. Euractiv does not forget to add that "the Irish are therefore pushed to the wall". The article in European Voice is probably the most complex one; it mentions the current political situation in the Czech Republic, talks about president Klaus but it also contains a few lines about the future of the LT in Germany and Poland. Spanish newspaper El País even quotes president Klaus: "The decision of the court was political". In what concerns the Irish press, the article in The Irish Times is the most interesting one – as the only of the mentioned articles it tries (albeit briefly) to explain the consequences of the LT.

In spite of the fact that Klaus' statements have recently been attracting negative attention and

a non-desirable media picture is therefore transferred to the upcoming Czech presidency, we should definitely not forget that it is very doubtful whether a public debate on the topic of LT would happen without his contribution to such extent or whether it would happen at all. With the decision that the ratification of the LT will happen in most EU countries, governments gave up on explaining the contents and meaning of the treaty to their citizens – a comparison with the large information campaign concerning its predecessor, the Treaty establishing a constitution for Europe is particularly interesting. The Czech government has only been trying to communicate in the last few weeks when the situation has grown pressing (e.g. a series of workshops organised by the Office of the Government) and that is a massive mistake. [More](#)

### **Czech Republic Supports the School Fruit Scheme**

Václav Bacovský

On 18-19 November, the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers approved the scheme to provide fruit and vegetables to school children. The total amount earmarked for this project consists of 90 million euro from European funds and approximately 66 million euro from national funds of Member States. Richer countries will co-finance the programmes on 50/50 basis; poorer states will pay towards a quarter of the costs. [The European Commission has in this way responded](#) to the alarming statistics: 22 million children in the EU are overweight, more than 5 million children are obese and the figure is expected to rise by 400,000 every year. The aim of the project is to form good eating habits. The World Health Organisation recommends a minimum daily net intake of 400 grams of fruit and vegetables per person. The majority of Europeans fail to meet this target and the downward trend is particularly evident among the young.

Despite the fact that the scheme has unexpectedly quickly found support throughout the EU, the [Czech Republic has been criticising](#) it for several reasons. First, it considered the costs ineffective in view of the demanding administration (a great deal of the money spent would be eaten up by bureaucracy). Furthermore, the arguments brought up the infringement of the subsidiarity principle (why should the EU handle the eating habits of children?) and insufficient support in primary law (the scheme is based in an agriculture directive, although it concerns health).

While the [European Parliament](#) had asked for a raise in the EU contribution up to 500 million euro, the Council did not approve the budget increase. With the upcoming presidency in view, the Czech Republic acted constructively and did not vote against the scheme. “During the negotiations, a fundamental shift was made. For example, it was agreed that it would be possible to favour local and seasonal fruit that would get to children fresh and without high transportation costs,” the [Agriculture Minister Petr Gandalovič stated](#). “What is also positive is the option to involve primarily parents, possibly also the private sector, in the financing, which will disburden the state budget.”

### **CCS: Pillar of the Climate-Energy Package?**

Vladimír Beroun, Jan Potucký

Numerous voices in the EU encourage member countries to accelerate the development and implementation of the technology of [CO<sub>2</sub> capture and storage \(CCS – Carbon Capture and Geological Storage\)](#), which should become a pillar of the [energy package](#). CCS is a process during which CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are separated from other gases produced when making electricity out of coal. CO<sub>2</sub> is then compressed and stored in geological structures under surface or bottom of the sea. However with regard to the costs and decrease in average effectiveness of power plants, most EU countries support it only vaguely.

[A major problem when bringing the innovation to practice is the financing of demonstration CCS projects](#). The approaches of member countries and European Parliament differ especially in the share of income from trade of emission permissions (ETS – Emission Trading Scheme) and the involvement of energy or private sectors. Everything is aggravated by the fact that the disposal of ETS income is decided solely on national level. In the Czech Republic [ČEZ energy company](#)

contemplates building a power plant using the CCS technology. However it asks for a contribution from the ETS system, which would paradoxically mean a reciprocal transfer of money.

The Council, Commission and Parliament will continue in discussions until 12 December when climate change conference ends in Poznan. France wants to let the package through during its presidency. However, new member countries are in opposition led by Poland, ready to freeze the proposal. Poland has even refused France's concession - a three year exception, because it deems this deadline insufficient. At the same time a meeting of ecologically oriented Polish NGOs took place, which unanimously asked the government to accept the package without any alterations. Even though the Czech Republic does not agree with a great part of the plan, it refuses to veto the proposal and the Prime Minister even proposes to accept the package this year.

To the top of it the EU finds itself in a position when concessions will mean reducing its negotiation relevance and pose a threat to Copenhagen 2009 which should bring a successor to the Kyoto protocol. The political alignment of the European Parliament after the election is also uncertain. The final decision-making will thus probably be handled by the Czech presidency, which already secures the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) covering the CCS technology. It is in the interest of the Czech Republic to supervise and push for the enforcement of this policy, because at the moment there is no other technology that would be so effective (albeit costly). More

## European Solution of the Financial Crisis?

Petr Hajný, Michal Vít

Most of the world's governments are fighting the financial crisis, the EU being no exception. The president of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso has unveiled the proposal of a Recovery plan for Europe which will be discussed during the session of the Council of the EU which takes place from 11 to 12 December 2008. If the plan is agreed on, the Czech Republic as the presiding country will play a significant role during its implementation. The biggest advantages of the proposal include a wide initiative to support employment, creation of employment demand, amelioration of entrepreneurial conditions, investment in innovation and clean technologies in the car making industry, which is the backbone of many EU economies (eg. CR, Germany, France).

The summit will take place at a time when Latvia will be negotiating the conditions of a loan from the International Monetary Fund and the EU in order to stabilize the financial system. Therefore, Latvia follows Hungary as the second EU country that had to ask for the help of the IMF. Experts fear that other Baltic states will follow. Different countries have different stances before the summit and therefore it is expected that the discussions will be very complicated. Up to now scepticism prevails. Concerns are voiced especially by Germany, which would contribute by the greatest amount and to a smaller extent also by the Czech Republic, which until now has not been affected so badly by the crisis. On the other side, Baltic countries or Bulgaria will fight for this plan because their economies would make a profit of it.

In the Czech Republic fears of loosening the budget discipline and stability which Prague has been trying to reach, prevail. However, it is likely that in the end it will be in favour of the plan – the car making industry on which the CR relies has been through a lot of hardship in the past few months.

## Comments on Recent News

### EU Froze its Help to Bulgaria

Bulgaria will never see the 220 million EUR from EU funds it has lost. Due to sluggish battle with corruption, the European Commission confirmed its July decision, when it denied Bulgarian authorities access to money from Phare. This has caused uproar at Bulgarian political scene. President Georgi Parvanov has stated that the government is fully responsible, but at the same time he deems the Commission's decision blatant, because it did not appreciate enough the

progress reached in the last six months, when significant structural and personnel changes were made. He has also exclaimed that Bulgaria becomes hostage of competing powers before the election to European Parliament. The opposition used the Commission's decision in its own way – for a thorough criticism of the government. The 220 million EUR mentioned represents just the Phare fund part, Bulgaria still might lose another hundreds of millions EUR (according to AFP 580 million EUR are concerned). From 2007 till 2013 Bulgaria might get as much as 11 billion EUR from the Union's treasury; however restrictions do not affect this money. The Czech Republic has also had trouble with getting money from Phare funds - it will sue the European Commission for almost quarter billion CZK.

### Europeana: Europe's Digital Dream Comes True

After more than two years of earnest labour, the European elite's plan to create a digital collection of European cultural heritage has been fulfilled. Thanks to modern technologies, Europeana, a free online European digital library, gathering not only books but also paintings, pieces of music, films, photos, broadcasting materials, newspapers and other traces of European culture, was made available. The president of the European Commission Barroso likened Europeana to the Library of Alexandria. Europeana undoubtedly becomes a significant symbol of single European identity. However EU's new digital library has not managed the overwhelming interest of visitors and collapsed right after launch (the number of visitors reached ten million in just an hour). The site will be re-launched in mid-December of this year. Meanwhile, those interested can have a look at the promotion video presenting the possibilities of the new library. The project was executed thanks to the cooperation of all European historic and audiovisual archives, museums and libraries. Currently it holds about 3,5 million of pieces and the number should surpass 10 million after two years. The operation of the library should cost about 2,5 million EUR annually, total digitalization expenses are estimated at about 225 million EUR. A few years ago Google has launched a similar project.

### The Czech Republic Enters ESA

On 12<sup>th</sup> November 2008, the Czech Republic, as the first ex-communist country, became the 18<sup>th</sup> member of ESA (European Space Agency). This step is significant namely for Czech science and industry, because space research is the leader of scientific and technologic development. It is also great news for those Czechs, who would once like to fulfil their dream of becoming an astronaut.

## Interesting Publications

### Centre for European Policy Studies

The paper "Climate Governance Post-2012: Options for EU Policy-Making" represents an overview of results of European research programme ADAM (Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies): Supporting European Climate Policy. The authors are concerned with the processes of future cooperation of parties engaged and esteem that the EU should play the key role of mediator.

### Centre for European Reform

The publication "Is EU competition policy an obstacle to innovation and growth?" is concerned with competitiveness in the EU. The author makes use of the provisions of the Lisbon strategy and criticizes some settings of the current European competitiveness policy which are one of the reasons why today Europe fares so poorly in the fields of innovation and modern technologies. In conclusion he mentions the case of Microsoft: "It still shows little recognition that monopoly positions in these businesses are often transitory because entry barriers are low, and that taking action against dominant high-tech firms could do more harm than good."

### Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik

Sustainability, efficiency and diversification of sources all belong to the main concepts of EU's energy policy. Diversification is the main topic of the publication "Mehr Pragmatismus, weniger Geopolitik: Effiziente Ansätze für die Energieversorgungssicherheit der EU". The author states that for its successful future more emphasis on pragmatism is inevitable. Rather than geopolitics, the

EU should concentrate more on research of renewable sources, their economization and the construction of infrastructure.

## Invitations

### **Discussion: The Czech Republic and Eastern Europe: Economic and Political Interests**

When: 4<sup>th</sup> December 2008, 5 pm – 6:30 pm

Where: Centrum Franze Kafky, Široká 14, Praha 1

Organizer: Association for International Affairs in cooperation with Respekt Institute

Guests: Jiří Schneider – PSSI, Radek Špicar – Škoda Auto, Karel Svoboda – AMO analyst

[More](#)

### **International Conference: Priorities and Prospects for the European Union**

When: 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> December 2008, from 9 am

Where: Grand Hall of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Loretánské náměstí 5, Praha 1

Organizer: Institute of International Relations in cooperation with other partners

[More](#)

### **Discussion: Czech EU Presidency**

When: 5<sup>th</sup> December 2008, from 2:30 pm

Where: former refectory of the Malostranský Palace, Malostranské náměstí 25, Praha 1

Organizer: European Parliament Information Office

Guests: Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament and others

[More](#)

### **Workshop: Euro from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 in Slovakia, Preparations for its Introduction in the Czech Republic**

When: 10<sup>th</sup> December 2008, 5 pm - 6:30 pm

Where: Eurocentrum Praha, Evropský dům, Jungmannova 24, Praha 1

Organizer: Eurocentrum Praha

Guests: Alena Sojková – Czech National Bank

[Registration](#)

## Upcoming Events

### **EU mission to Kosovo**

The UN Security Council has [approved](#) the deployment of the EU-led mission to Kosovo [EULEX](#), the largest mission launched of the EU, whose implementation will start this December. About 2000 policemen, judges and prosecutors will assist with the establishment of judicial and police institutions for 28 months. Despite that, diplomats are unofficially talking about [5-10 years](#).

### **Climate Change Conference in Poznań**

On 1-12 December 2008, the Polish city of Poznań will host the [conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) that is expected to contribute to the advancement in discussions on further proceeding of states in the post-Kyoto regime after 2012. Delegates from more than 180 countries will attend the meeting, including the Czech Republic, which will be represented by Martin Bursík, the Czech Minister of Environment. A follow-up to the conference will [in Copenhagen](#) next year, where a new deal on climate change should be clinched.

### **EU-Georgia Cooperation Council Meeting**

The relations between EU and Georgia have been paid unprecedented attention, especially after the Russia-Georgia conflict this summer. Therefore, agenda of the [EU-Georgia Cooperation](#)

Council meeting on 9 December 2008 will focus on future cooperation between the EU and Georgia. Simultaneously, negotiations with Armenia and Azerbaijan are also taking place.

### European Council Summit – Lisbon Treaty in the Spotlight

On 11-12 December 2008, a regular summit of the European Council will take place in Brussels. The Irish Prime Minister is going to introduce a report analyzing the results of the unsuccessful referendum in June and suggesting further steps. The summit should therefore provide at least a broad outline of the response to one of the key questions of the following months.

## European Election 2009

### Czech Political Parties and the European Parliament: Half a Year Before the Election

Katarína Lokšová, Michal Vít

In exactly six months, from 4 till 7 June 2009, the Czech Republic will live through its second European Parliament (EP) election. Half a year before the election, we witness different methods of preparation of various political parties and current members of the EP. For the time being, ODS has been silent about the EP elections and it offers only speculations about its candidates – the names that emerge include ODS Jan Zahradil or Eduard Kožušník. The last of coalition partners, KDU-ČSL, is the most diligent, because it already knows its candidates – the slate is led by two current MEPs, Zuzana Roithová and Jan Březina at second place. In what concerns ČSSD, some time ago the media brought news that current EU Commissioner Vladimír Špidla neither wants to lead ČSSD's slate nor run for the EP. The topic is momentarily not one of the priorities for ČSSD in spite of the fact that chairman Paroubek estimates his party's results at 35 to 40%.

Another member of the EU who will run for her second term is Jana Bobošíková, chairwoman of Politika 21, which defines itself as a modern liberal political party. Bobošíková entered the spotlight in February when KSČM nominated her to run for president. A similar rapprochement is not expected for the EP election - KSČM's slate is dominated by Miroslav Ransdorf and Vladimír Remek. Last week another political grouping introduced itself to the public – Evropská demokratická strana (EDS) led by one of the most active Czech MEPs Jana Hybášková. It will be interesting to see whether Hybášková will succeed in “selling” her activity in the EP on domestic soil. EDS profiles itself as a pro-European party which wants to support European standards.

The current political atmosphere does not suggest that the campaign will be dominated by European topics. In spite of the fact that ČSSD has not unveiled its pre-election strategy, a potentially aggressive campaign towards the current government and especially towards ODS would almost surely baffle the opening of EU-related topics during the pre-election battles as well as limit the space for candidates of smaller political groupings. Let's hope that the EP election will happen in the name of real discussion with strong representation of an opinion spectrum and will not become the so popular “referendum on government”.

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**The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Association for International Affairs.**

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