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Policy Paper 6/2013

Eastern Partnership after the Vilnius Summit: Prague Reflections

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Policy Recommendations

- The months before the Vilnius Summit revealed divergence in the policy of EaP countries. It has had various roots – internal political instability, external pressure or unwillingness to adhere EU values, to name just a few. Therefore, differentiation in the EU approach has intensified. This has been already included in the *more for more* concept introduced by the EC. Nevertheless, if applied consistently, it might draw the attention only at the most advancing countries. Differentiation should not bring the concept *nothing for nothing* vis-à-vis partners with less successful European policy and the EU has to grant options in some areas also for problematic cases, since there is no place for cherry-picking in the neighbourhood policy. Neighbours will remain there. Though constantly evident from the very initiation of the EaP, one should note that the EaP is not only about Ukraine and its success cannot be evaluated solely with regard to the negotiations with this partner.
- The multilateral platforms should remain viable tool for tackling negative implications of the differentiation. Bearing in mind that EaP is a platform initiated by the EU, there must be much effort invested into the multilateral projects.
- The EaP is about transfer of values and norms from the EU to EaP countries. EaP Civil Society Forum has played important role in the bottom-up process of bringing the EaP partners closer to the EU. The Civil Society Forum should be given comprehensive support in its initiatives. Apart from EU funding aimed at strengthening the civil society in the EaP countries, the importance of other institutions is rising. E.g. the International Visegrad Fund has broadened its activities in EaP countries and the fact that non-V4 members are willing to financially contribute to those projects provide it with further credibility.
- The issue of visibility and communication is pivotal. Apart from the undoubted task for political elites, civil society and European Houses have the pivotal role in that process. The lack of communication creates a space for negative campaigns conducted by anti-EU segments of society.
- DCFTA is an emblematic case of the badly communicated EaP benefits. Given its complicated wording, people can hardly imagine what really stands



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behind. The emphasis needs to be put on concrete facts and figures, which is applicable to other EaP instruments as well.

- The EaP citizens should be given the chance to form a well-informed opinion on their countries' relations with the EU. In doing that, the gradual development and long-term benefits that are harder to achieve should not be overplayed with short-term effects which are evidently lower.
- Among the most important burdens of the EaP is the Visa issue. The fact that Russia wins over EU in the free movement of people complicates any EU integration efforts. On the other hand, it has been exactly the Visa regime which plays an important role as a tool with whom the EU can push the EaP elites when needed. However, there is still a lot of space for the visa procedure facilitation for certain groups such as students, human rights defenders, NGO workers, academicians, think-tankers etc.
- Russian policy towards the EaP countries has sharpened. Nevertheless, the sole fact that Russia is taking EaP seriously is an important step forward. We should not underestimate as well as overestimate its role taking into account its unpredictability. Russia has not progressed in economic terms as much as it used to and there is a question of how much it can deliver to EaP countries in a long term perspective except for energy resources. The EU should not abandon its role as a soft power in European neighbourhood. In dealing with Russia over the economic pressure on the EaP countries, the role of the WTO to whom both Russia and the majority of EaP states adhere, should not be forgotten.
- EU as well as EaP countries should take some time for reflection after the Vilnius Summit. There will be several important shifts in EU institutions. New High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy should be someone with visible track-record in the EU Eastern policy and much attention should be given to the division of labour between the High Representative and respective Commissioner.



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Eastern Partnership and Czech Foreign Policy in 2013

In view of the preparation of the summit in Vilnius at the end of November, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) represented one of the main foreign policy priorities in 2013. The bureaucratic sector placed sufficient emphasis on this topic. Thanks to this, Czech priorities were reflected in the EU's annual policy in relation to Ukraine and the conclusions of the Vilnius summit. This was essentially a confirmation of the "European aspirations and European choice" of partner countries. On the other hand, the support of political representatives was inconsistent. The credibility of the Czech Republic's position was not helped by President Zeman's comments on Azerbaijan, or his ambiguously assessed visit to Ukraine.

These incidents show that although the EaP is supported as a priority at a declaratory policy level, its long-term importance and the specific problems of its implementation have not been properly assessed. This approach has also led to insufficient communication with the media and the public and an inability to explain the benefits of the implementation of this project; above all in strengthening the security and stability of the European Neighbourhood and better conditions for Czech businesses on these markets.

The superficial approach of political leaders to the EaP was revealed by the crisis in Ukraine following the summit in Vilnius. Although Minister Jan Kohout met with opposition leader Klitschko in December at a meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Kiev, Czech diplomacy remained silent for a whole week after the summit. The V4's position also came with a delay. As a result, occasional lamentation regarding the ambivalence and passivity of the EU by some Czech politicians seems almost comical, given the lack of their own proactive policy.

Czech foreign policy lacks a clearly profiled personality to advocate the EaP on a bureaucratic and political level, both in relation to foreign and domestic players. Czech diplomats resent the monopolisation of the EaP by Poland and Sweden in view of the amount of work they have done in this area (the activity of embassies, support for the development of civil society and democratisation through transformation cooperation). However, without activity at all levels, the Czech Republic will never be seen at the driving force of this project.



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In 2014, the Czech Republic should resolutely support the Eastern Partnership project, despite disappointment in its development in 2013. The high-profile meeting planned in Prague at the end of April should be the key event of this year, taking into account the involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other institutions. Following the Vilnius summit and events in Ukraine, it is essential to make it clear to EU Member States, Russia, and the USA that the EaP has a future. Support for cooperating governments should be emphasised. Funding for non-governmental organisations in EaP countries deserves to be significantly increased.

Czech political representatives should not relativise the importance of human rights in the foreign policy agenda and weaken its ties to transformation cooperation. Decreasing the emphasis on the first generation of human rights jeopardises not only the long-built international brand of the Czech Republic, but also its expertise in this area, including the non-governmental organisations involved. If the government wants to increase interest in the second and third generation of human rights, it must adequately increase the budget for this area of foreign policy.



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Association for International Affairs (AMO) is a preeminent independent think-tank in the Czech Republic in the field of foreign policy. Since 1997, the mission of AMO has been to contribute to a deeper understanding of international affairs through a broad range of educational and research activities. Today, AMO represents a unique and transparent platform in which academics, business people, policy makers, diplomats, the media and NGO's can interact in an open and impartial environment.

In order to achieve its goals AMO strives to:

- formulate and publish briefings, research and policy papers;
- arrange international conferences, expert seminars, roundtables, public debates;
- organize educational projects;
- present critical assessment and comments on current events for local and international press;
- create vital conditions for growth of a new expert generation;
- support the interest in international relations among broad public;
- cooperate with like-minded local and international institutions.

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