

European Interview

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“The Polish government believes that it is time to introduce a new model of economic growth in Europe”

European interview with Mikolaj DOWGIELEWICZ, Polish Secretary of State for European Affairs

1. Poland will be undertaking the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for a six month period as of 1st July 2011. Would it be possible for you to present the main priorities of this presidency?

During the preparatory work for the Presidency of the Council, we set ourselves three main goals:

European integration as a source of growth. The Polish Presidency will work to foster economic growth through further development of the internal market (including the electronic market) and using the EU's budget for building a competitive Europe. Following the economic crisis, the EU has concluded that new rules on economic governance are required, including new tools, such as the European Stabilization Mechanism, to prevent return waves of the crisis. The Polish government believes that the European Union has to move on to the next stage: it is time to introduce a new model of economic growth, one that should enable the Union to secure an appropriate level of economic development for the coming decades and guarantee the well-being of EU citizens.

A Secure Europe – Food, Energy, Defence. This means Europe improving its macro-economic security and also that of food as well as undertaking an external energy policy that will facilitate security in that area. The Commission was asked to act in terms of an external energy policy during the Transport, Telecommunication and Energy Council on 31st May last.

A “Secure Europe” also means border security. During our Presidency we will pursue the conclusion of work on changes to the regulation

on the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex). The Polish Presidency of the EU Council will also aim to strengthen military and civil EU capabilities. We will support actions towards the consolidation of direct EU-NATO dialogue.

Europe benefiting from openness. Two details are vital to this: continuing enlargement, developing partnerships (in the East and the South of Europe). All of this is obviously taking place in an international context that we cannot ignore such as the “Arab Spring” for example. The European Union must support democratic change and Poland can provide its own experience in this area. As for the Eastern Partnership, there will be a summit devoted to this on 29th and 30th September in Warsaw.

These are our priorities presented here in a very general manner. However as I answer your questions changes developments are still possible depending on the Union's situation, on the results achieved by the Hungarian Presidency and on the conclusions of the June European Council.

2. Do you think that the worst of the crisis has passed? In your opinion has the EU emerged politically stronger from this period of economic instability and uncertainty?

Again, as I speak to you, we are following discussions and the decisions that are being taken closely, notably with regard to Greece. So, it is difficult to say whether the crisis is over. But I would like to stress two things.

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The first is that every crisis is an important phase. We should emerge strengthened by this because it has taught us a great deal about how we work and how we can improve this. When your teeth don't ache you don't even realise you have teeth. It's when you're in pain that you start to look for a cure and think about how you can avoid the same situation in the future. So, every crisis is useful.

Secondly I have to say that we are approaching the presidency in a resolutely optimistic way, saying that it is time to start talking of “recovery” and not of “crisis”.

3. In its programme the Polish presidency believes that the EU has learnt from the crisis and that economic governance has been reformed. The need to “move on to the next stage and set out a growth model according to which the EU can continue its social and economic development” is also mentioned. Would you describe to us what this model is in real terms?

Growth can be fostered by various legislative mechanisms that facilitate development in certain areas. The construction of the single on-line market, supporting SME's and even the creation of an easily available European patent system are just a few ideas to explore. As an example, nearly 60% of on-line transactions are not completed because of administrative barriers. As far as SME support is concerned it is a crucial challenge for the EU because SME's are precisely the ones which create 70% of jobs and 60% of the GDP.

We are also working on the creation of the 28th legal system to facilitate finalising sales agreements within the internal market, including simplifying potential internet transactions for 500 million citizens. This new legal system will run alongside the 27 already in place.

4. Some governments reacted quite negatively to the Commission's draft budget which had been increased by 4.9% [1] over 2012. It is also the presidency's role to act as a conciliator. What will your arguments be to support, or not, the Commission's request?

Effectively as far as the budget is concerned we shall play the role of intermediary, which is always that of the presidency. But we have to take on board the situation which results from the multiannual financial framework 2007-2013. This was negotiated in 2005 and commitments have to be adhered to. As a result there is no question of supporting the Commission or not in this context. We shall be the conciliators in this discussion to ensure that commitments that have already been taken are adhered to. All of this should foster the recovery of economic growth and citizens' confidence.

5. The negotiations over the difficult issue of the multiannual financial framework 2014-2020 will start under the Polish Presidency. You would like the budget to be the most important investment tool. Which positions will be supported more precisely?

As you quite rightly point out we are starting negotiations but we shan't be able to complete them. As a result of this, at this stage it seems important to establish clear rules that will have to be respected when the discussion moves on to the next stage: i.e. figures. Again we already have a guideline that will help us to forge a route and that is the Agenda 2020. Our work has to move towards completing its goals in terms of innovation and growth.

The Polish Presidency wants the new budget to show that greater cooperation in the European Union is the right answer to give to the economic crisis and that the cohesion policy is still vital to the Union, which all Member States benefit, and will benefit from in the future. It will also be important to reform the Common Agricultural Policy in order to modernise European agriculture and to guarantee it greater competitiveness.

6. What are Poland's goals in terms of the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy? Most of the EU's countries support a simplification of the CAP and updated means of intervention. Given the structural challenges presented by farms and speculation on agricultural products is this the right time for an in-depth reform? What

1. <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/11/499&format=HTML&aged=0&language=FR&guiLanguage=fr>

has to be done initially if realistic goals are to be set?

The Polish government believes that enhancing security in Europe implies the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for the effective use of community funds. The consolidation of the CAP should ensure that it is oriented towards the market and take public goods into account, including food security and the multi-functional development of agriculture and the rural world. The issue of direct payments and that of supporting rural development are key elements of the reformed CAP.

As far as simplifying the CAP is concerned we must take Member States' positions into account, likewise the situation of the farmers, who often face complicated administrative hurdles. We shall not avoid any detail, even those that seem the most problematic.

7. The Commission presented its new “Single Market Act” on 13th April. What are the measures you would like to support as a priority and which should be developed at a time when the free movement of people is being challenged? What might we expect of the “Single Market Forum” that is being planned by your presidency?

Poland will support the package of modifications to the European market directives (the so-called “Single Market Act”) prepared by the European Commission. We shall also be organising the Single Market Forum (SIMFO) on 3rd and 4th October; this is an important event that supports the development of the internal market. This forum will provide an exceptional opportunity to bring together European and national decision makers to debate the future of the market. It will also be an opportunity for the Polish presidency to present its goals to the representatives of the economic and political world at the same time.

8. Until the visit by the Polish Foreign Minister on 11th May last Poland was quite cautious in terms of the position it adopted during the Libyan crisis. This reveals the difficulty in finding consensus and taking

joint action over security and defence issues. What conclusions have you drawn whilst European defence is a strategic priority for the Polish Presidency?

In terms of external policy the Presidency of the Council is not a major player since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. But of course we cannot ignore this area and we shall work together with the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton. I would also like to add that although our position might seem cautious, it is clear, notably since Mr Sikorski's visit to Libya. Since then he has been to Egypt and Tunisia. As a result we are no longer cautious, but quite determined to fulfil our role. We have also suggested the creation of a European foundation in support of democracy. This project will be submitted to our European partners.

9. Poland has demonstrated that it wants the enlargement of the EU to continue. Here we refer to its desire to see the accession treaty with Croatia signed and for negotiations in the Balkans to continue. What are the presidency's goals on this?

During its presidency Poland would like to make real progress in terms of enlargement. One of the main goals of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the Union will be to complete membership negotiations with Croatia and to sign the membership treaty. Of course our involvement in the process depends on the progress made during the Hungarian presidency. We shall also use every opportunity to continue membership negotiations with Turkey. We shall take care to take negotiations forward with Iceland and we shall encourage the European aspirations of the Western Balkan States.

10. Over the last few months there has been a disturbing rise on the part of the populist movements in Europe and policies are being challenged. Europe is often treated as a scapegoat. Can you tell us what will be done under the Polish Presidency to bring Europe closer to its citizens?

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It is true that every economic crisis brings its share of nationalism and withdrawal. The phenomenon is well-known and we now have to face it Europe wide. On this issue we are preparing a presidency based on our own experience. Poland is almost an exception in terms of the public opinion's support of Europe with over 80% of the population in favour. This is certainly due to the real benefits that the population has drawn from Poland's membership of the EU. Therefore we believe that it is with real action in terms of living standards that we can reverse this trend in Europe. Strengthening the single market, notably in the area of the digital economy, and even with action in support of the improved harmonisation of the telecoms market (roaming) are just two examples amongst

others. It is also important not to forget the solidarity principle, especially, in times of crisis. So yes, although it is difficult, we can change how the entire population sees Europe. But the task is often difficult and we are aware of this.



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