



Centrum Stosunków Międzynarodowych
Center for International Relations

The European Union and Southeastern Europe

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On the 12th of May, 2005 the Center of International Relations held a conference titled “The European Union and Southeastern Europe.” Participants included Prof. Adam Rotfeld, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland; Mr. Iurie Rosca, Deputy Chairman of the Moldavian Parliament and Leader of the Christian-Democratic People's Party; Mr. Stanislav Shushkevich, former President of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Belarus; Mr. Ihor Kharczenko, Ambassador of Ukraine to Poland; Ms. Judith Gebetsroithner, representative of the European Commission, Office of Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner, Mr. Vyachaslau Pazdnyak, Belarusian oppositionist. The conference was led by Mr. Janusz Reiter, President of the Center for International Relations and was concluded by Mr. Jakub Boratyński, Program Director of the Stefan Batory Foundation. The following presentations are an unofficial record of the conference presented by the Center for International Relations.

Janusz Reiter: Opening remarks.

I think that the interest that is enjoyed by problems of Eastern policy of the European Union, a policy that formally does not yet exist but is in the process of being born and which direct and more distant neighbors, is one of the most important phenomenon of Polish politics of the last ten years. Until recently, the outlook here was mainly on the West. Now people thinking about politics are mainly interested in the East. Why is this so? Certainly this expresses the belief that what is happening to the East of Poland affects our major interests. Moreover, in Poland, there is a certain feeling of mission and obligation. This is likely the feeling that we are giving something of what we ourselves received when Poland was the country that required external support. The countries of Southeastern Europe need people who understand them and can share their knowledge with others.

Unlike most policies of the European Union, Eastern policy has not already been created by others for adoption by us. It is something that was created through our vital participation and the participation of other new member states. It would be senseless to create a policy against or without those countries because even though those countries do not have a monopoly on truth and knowledge on this topic, they have experience. It is my impression that our Western neighbors have accepted this role of the new member states.

Adam Daniel Rotfeld: Eastern policy of the European Union: The Polish contribution.

I will not so much inform you about what the Eastern policy of the European Union is but will rather talk about the Polish perspective. Three elements need to be taken into consideration

Firstly, we are very often saying that Poland is in a new security environment. After 1989, the situation of Poland is totally different than it was before. I'm not speaking of the transformation of domestic policy, but about our surrounding which is totally different. Before 1989, we were neighboring three countries: the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic. Today, instead of these three neighbors, we have seven, and none of them is as the same as before. In the East, our neighboring countries are: Lithuania, the Russian Federation – Kaliningrad district, Belarus and Ukraine. In the South: the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and in the West instead of the German Democratic Republic, there is the Federal Republic of Germany. Thus it was a real departure for us to define the new policy.

The second new element is that very often people are raising the question about the Polish foreign policy towards the European Union. I would like to say that since the first of May 2004, there is no Polish policy towards the European Union, because we are an interior part of the European Union. For many of us, it is great challenge to digest properly what that means. In fact, we already had our Eastern policy and that Polish Eastern policy was defined in the middle of the sixties by two Polish political writers, Juliusz Miroszewski and Jerzy Giedroyc. They defined main conceptual changes for Poland's policies towards Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania. We tried to bring the main gist and the main concept of that political philosophy to the European Union. The main new element in our dealings with the three new neighbors is the idea of replacing the exclusiveness with inclusiveness. In the past, the policy was mainly dominated by the concept of how to defend the territory because the surrounding world was perceived as a natural, hostile enemy. Currently, the Polish and the EU policy are focused on cooperation and creation of close relations with our neighbors. I am happy to say that the policy, traditionally advocated by us, towards our Eastern neighbourhood has been largely successful.

Thirdly, I should note that before the accession of the Central Eastern European countries to the European Union, the main neighborhood policy was addressed to the Mediterranean. I would like to say that, at the moment, our intention is not to counterbalance, but to emphasize that Eastern Policy is as important as Mediterranean Policy. European Neighborhood Policy should offer the prospect for an increasingly close relationship involving a significant degree of Economic integration and a deepening of political cooperation. The

perspective of economic integration is one of the most important questions with regard to the relations with our Eastern neighbors. We think that a gradual extension of the four freedoms of the single market to the neighboring states would certainly be an important incentive in bringing them closer to European values and standards. Nevertheless, the European Union should be realistic in making any commitment and avoiding statements that would provoke expectations, which cannot be fulfilled.

I would like to draw your attention to the necessity of improving the assistance methods in the area of democratization and enhancing civil society in countries of Eastern Europe. We propose to our European partners the idea of establishing a new and more flexible instrument, the European Democracy Fund that would be very helpful in this area. EU support in the area of democratization and enhancing civil society in the countries of Eastern Europe needs improvement. Poland is proposing to our European partners the idea of establishing a new instrument - the European Democracy Fund. It would be equally addressed to Eastern neighbors and South-Mediterranean partners, because so far, a substantial imbalance to the disadvantage of Eastern countries has been noted. The European Democracy Fund needs to replace the current neighborhood policy from 2007.

Neighborhood policy towards Ukraine

The participation of Poland in the political crisis in Ukraine was evidence of Poland's ability to take effective and active steps in creating and implementing the EU eastern policy. Regarding the internal changes in Ukraine, the reaction of the Union was constructive and positive. Yet, in the future, much more work remains.

Many people incorrectly interpret the Polish and the EU's involvement in the Ukrainian transition in November and December 2004 as taking responsibility for the internal transformation. The whole transformation was, however, initiated and developed by Ukrainians. Our very modest contribution included assistance and advice how to avoid violent conflict and bloodshed, proved to be successful. For us it was a new and very important experience to do this together with the European Union, the Council of Europe and Lithuania. Most importantly, our cooperation was not against another nation, but for the Ukrainian people. Many people, especially in Russia, have misinterpreted our actions as being against Russia. This was not the case at all. Poland always emphasized that our Ukrainian friends should keep the best cooperative relations with Russia.

The European Union's offer to Ukraine, presented in the form of the EU-Ukraine Action Plan, has to be followed by the granting of market economy status, good and early preparation of the negotiations of a free trade agreement, negotiations on visa facilitation, enhancing people

to people contact, technical and financial assistance and finally a new enhanced agreement, possibly an association agreement. We should move to make substantial initiatives as well as implementing decisions and assistance programs. It is indispensable to increase expert and financial assistance to Ukraine. Poland will start implementation of some projects soon. In March 2005, I have proposed Ukrainian partners the Polish expert assistance designed to enhance the development of Ukrainian democratic institutions, and bringing them closer to the EU standards, taking an advantage of the experience of Polish administration. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs will finance some programs and projects prepared by NGOs and our administration in cooperation with Ukraine that will provide assistance to the reform process in the country. The EU should do everything in order to ensure the best relations with Ukraine. The time is ripe to think about creating a European University in Kiev or in L'viv. This would be the best investment for the future by the EU. The idea is already taken for granted by many, but there is still has not been a formal decision.

Neighborhood policy towards Belarus

The relations between the European Union and Belarus are much more complicated. Poland borders Belarus and shares centuries of common history, therefore, we are strongly committed to good neighborly relations to this country. Moreover, we would like to see fair treatment of the Polish minority in Belarus and we would like Belarus to be an independent and democratic country. However, what we see in Belarus today is an attempt to tighten controls on civil society as exemplified recently by the closure of the Institute for Social, Economic and Political Affairs, one of the few independent research centers in Belarus.

We are aware that free access to information as well as people to people contacts are of crucial importance for rapprochement of Eastern European countries with the European Union. Perhaps, the greatest need for such contacts and unbiased information is in Belarus. Belarussian society should not be left convinced that Europe is indifferent to them, that we do not care. Therefore, we are developing within the European Union a comprehensive assistance strategy for the civil society building process in Belarus. We would like to increase assistance to the Belarusian democratic leaders and NGOs, news organizations, trade unions, independent media, local organizations and initiatives. The European Union is ready to establish cooperation with Belarus as well as to offer the country all opportunities derived from the European neighborhood, if only democratic reform starts.

Neighborhood policy towards Moldova

Poland welcomes Moldova's determination to continue on the path of reforms and cooperation with the EU. We are very glad that the direction has been democratic, fair and transparent. We consider the European Union-Moldova Action Plan, adopted last February,

be a good basis for closer relations with the European Union. Hopefully, the Moldavian government will be ready to start implementation of the Action Plan as soon as possible. The progress in the process will be considered as a proof of its commitment to European Union integration. Poland is ready to provide Moldova with technical assistance, share its experience in the reform process as well as implementation of European standards. Currently, we have invited a group of three or four high Moldavian officials to come to Poland and learn about our experiences, structures and procedures.

In our view, the European Union policy towards Moldova should be more active. Poland has supported an establishment of the EU special representative to Moldova (currently the representative from the Netherlands). We see his role in assisting the country in adopting the EU standards. His actions will also facilitate a more prominent role for the EU relations with Moldavia.

Recently, I noted that everything in Chisinau is new and will help to settle the Transnistrian conflict: New people, new institutions, and new ways of thinking. In Tiraspol, everything is as the same as twelve years ago: The same people, the same institutions, the same struggles. Their way of thinking remains the same and that is the problem. The new government of Ukraine is trying to be helpful in stopping trafficking and this is one of the key elements. In my view, this is one of the key elements. The EU could support an international monitoring mission on the Moldavian-Ukrainian border, if the parties agree. Settling of the conflict is connected to the full acceptance of the requirements established in Istanbul dealing with the withdrawal of Russian army. The key to solve the conflict is in hands of people in Chisinau and Tiraspol. Of course, all solutions must respect the integrated territory of Moldova.

Iurie Rosca: Republic of Moldova: from the neighbor state to the candidate of the EU.

At the beginning, I would like to underline that Moldova is approximately 20 years later in changing when compared to other states in the region. Currently it is the only country in Europe with Communists in power, however, they are changing and restructuring in a positive direction. I am a representative of the Christian-Democratic People's Party, which has eleven of the 101 mandates in parliament. 56 of the mandates in parliament belong to the Communists and 35 to the so-called "Democratic Block of Moldova." In recent times, even before the elections and continuing after the elections, a form of consensus was created between the authority and the opposition on the foreign policy of Moldova and also on its relations with the Transdnistr Republic. All the political powers in Moldova have achieved consensus on European integration in February of this year. Embarking on this road, Christian Democrats proposed to President Voronin the adoption of a series of quick

reforms that could make it possible to reform or transform Moldova into a more interesting country for its foreign partners and at the same time to increase their trust. We are lagging behind with regard to fundamental problems: independent impartial courts, the independence prosecutor's office, the status of the special forces, electoral law and all other elementary parts of the legal order. The first revolutionary proposals of the Christian Democrats have already been accepted by our political opponents, who have now become our post-electoral allies. As of today, all the sessions of the Moldavian parliament are broadcast live on television and radio in our country. This is a unique and extraordinary event, which lets us hope that more radical developments in this line will take place leading to the disassembling of the totalitarian system of our country by means of legal tools.

The most difficult problem for Moldova concerns the regulations pertaining to Transdnestr. At its core, this is an international conflict between the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation, which is delayed in its enactment of international obligations such as the withdrawal of Russian troops from our territory. This presence of Russian troops, an occupational force, is illegal. We hope that with the help of our friends from Poland, other European Union states and our American partners, we will be able to convince the Russian federation to execute its international obligations.

At the same time we are expressing our great joy and happiness in the changes that have taken place upon the Presidential elections in Ukraine, which we strongly supported. This change also lets us hope that we might be able put an end to illegal activities such as the smuggling of drugs and other hazardous materials across the region and across Transdnestr. The Moldavian government is now intensively cooperating with our partners from Kiev, on formulation of a common border and customs control along the entire length of the borders, and on taking another step in order to regulate this conflict. This issue can only be solved by means of democratic methods pursuant to the constitution of the Republic of Moldova devoid of any military or political pressure, which has unfortunately accompanied this issue in recent years.

The Republic of Moldova is extremely thankful to the European Union for the opening, for its support in our efforts towards integration. At the same time, unfortunately, we cannot agree with the fact that the status of a good neighbor is the final stop on our road towards European integration. Hopefully, the execution of the three-year-plan will intensify the development of our relations and ensure that the perspective of including Moldova as a full-fledged member of the European Union will be open. In this, I hope that we will be accompanied by our Georgian and Ukrainian friends. The Republic of Moldova also needs closer relations with NATO. In 1994, when we adopted the constitution, the lawmakers in our

country came to the conclusion that the status of neutrality will make it possible to avoid the foreign military presence in our territory. Unfortunately this idea never became true. Because of this, there is the need for closer relations with NATO and possibly membership. This will be supported not only by the Christian Democrats, but also by other parties represented in the parliament, including the one in power. At present, we are cooperating rather successfully within the NATO "Partnership for Peace" program.

Stanislav Shushkevich: Belarus, Europe – authorities and opposition.

We do not and cannot have a Belarusian opposition without a parliament, but the legally elected parliament was eliminated. In a new parliament, there were 12 opposition members, which were also eliminated. Nine of them were simply corrupted. Three remaining people were called criminals in spite of the fact that one of them was an Olympic games champion, another one a General and third a very well-known business man. Their lives in Belarus are extremely difficult now, as they cannot find a job anywhere. We do not have independent courts, where the opposition members could turn to. Such courts have also been "taken care of" by Lukashenko in his second or third year in office.

Belarus is very often compared to Ukraine and there were times when we were even ahead of Ukraine in terms of democratization. In 1991 and 1992, on Belarus, we made an effort to democratize the legislation and legislature and we had a new constitution adopted in March 1994. Unfortunately, Lukashenko, was elected in June 1994. At first, he formally subjected himself to the constitution. From the very beginning he monopolized all electronic media and from 1995 we have had first a low-level dictatorship, which later turned into a higher-level dictatorship.

According to Belarusian propaganda, in Belarus exists only one person, President of the Republic of Belarus, who knows how to govern. He is now pushing a so-called new absolute model of development, including the expansion of the Belarusian economy, which is an eclectic collection of different types of economic ideologies, including the old communist ideology. The figures that are presented by the authorities are not really reflective of what is indeed happening in Belarus, but there are other figures that are difficult to hide. For example, the life expectancy in Belarus is the lowest in Europe and the Belarusian currency has lost the most its value in relation to other post-Soviet republics. The Belaruasian Ruble has devalued by a factor of 75 to the Russian Ruble, despite the fact that Belarus did not experienced a so-called Black Tuesday, which was experienced in Russia. These facts about life-expectancy and inflation cannot be hidden. They are well-known.

The general, but false perception of the Belarusian opposition is that it is small, dispersed and not well organized. This is the view in Poland as well as in other European countries perpetuated by Belarusian propaganda. However, eighty percent of the Belarusian opposition is unified and follow democratic rules, that is the 5 + and the so-called 10 +. A comparison between the political platform of Yushchenko and the 5 + program shows that these documents are almost identical. From the public relations point of view, however, the Ukrainians document is much better, as it were completed by experts in that field.

Comparing Ukraine to Belarus, a few differences become evident. These distinctions will cause the political situation not to develop as it did in Ukraine. First, the printed mass media in Ukraine have been independent and comparable in number to the state-owned and controlled media. In Belarus, however, for one independent newspaper, there are twenty-four state-controlled, regime-controlled titles. We also do not have any independent electronic media. Hopefully, we will be able to set up an independent radio station with Polish support. Furthermore, in Poland, for example, everybody is free to use the internet. In Belarus, only four percent of the electorate have access to the internet.

The Belarusian opposition is very different from the Ukrainian. Almost fifty percent of the opposition was present in the Ukrainian parliament. In the Belarusian parliament, we have not any opposition and thus no means for actual undertakings and actions. Moreover in Belarus, there is lack of rich Belarusians, who could sponsor us from abroad, different than Ukraine.

This is not to say that the opposition is an enemy of Russia. We have a long border (1560km) with Russia, a similar mentality as Russians and have nothing against Russia as such. There is sometimes a conflict from time to time in our mutual relations.

We have very little hope and expectation for a social outbreak. Our GDP per capita in Belarus is higher than in Ukraine. A Belarusian farmer, for example, has a better life then farmers in the Orlovsk or the Smalensk regions in Ukraine. This does not apply to all of them, but this is certainly the type of information, that Belarusians are fed through propaganda. Nevertheless, when it comes to the per capita GDP, our GDP level is three and a half times worse than Poland's, but still better than Ukraine's. Hopefully, Ukraine will pursue the road of economic growth upon the democratic developments.

Attempting to oppose the leadership before the last election, we had to campaign door to door as we had no access to the media. According to the Gallup polls, the authority had the highest support of 37.5% ten days before the election. That was the worst case scenario.

The support in the worst-case scenario for the opposition should have been 48%. Thanks to propaganda on TV and on the radio, and to authority analysts that claimed all the achievements of the opposition for themselves, they changed the opinion polls. This was not because of a weak opposition, but because of the strong mobilization of government forces.

Whenever the regime finds itself in trouble, it seeks and gets the support of Russia. Lukashenko has even taken certain steps to unite currencies although this would be his own demise as he would lose the power to print money in difficult times. I do not know if Belarus would continue to exist, but Lukashenko certainly would not.

We have difficulties regarding the existence of political parties. As of today, it is forbidden to have party offices in private apartments. The authorities, however, hold all other premises. If we not comply the rules, the party will be closed. This is the undemocratic reality of current law in Belarus. The second way of oppressing the opposition is by imposing huge penalties. For example, we have persons with an income of \$500 being fined \$2000. These are opposition activists whose work is being thwarted by the authorities.

There have been a lot of statements that the US has allocated \$5 million to help political parties in Belarus. The truth is that no political party has received any support apart from invitations to discussions and some donations for small printouts. However, we need the same help that Poland once received from the West, when Poland was in a worse state than Belarus is today. Poles understand this much better than representatives from other European countries. Our problem with the European administration is that help, according to the rules of the EU may only go through official authorities. Such help, however, is only cosmetic as everything is done by official authorities.

Ihor Kharczenko: Ukrainian expectations.

Ukraine made its ultimate goals membership in the European Union and NATO. Before the political crisis in the Ukraine, the European representative residing in Ukraine, the ambassador to the country then heading the EU, said that if the Ukrainian election showed that it was held in a democratic, open, and free manner then membership in the EU should be considered the “light at the end of tunnel.” Now the political crisis is finished and I want to express my respect for the involvement of the EU. Special thanks are directed toward Polish officials for their involvement. I agree with the answer of Javier Solana, who stated that the involvement in the Ukrainian matter in November and December can be recognized as one of the most important examples of cooperative EU foreign policy. The crisis is the already over. The EU, although it is interested in a close two-sided relationship, gives

Ukraine signals that the door to EU membership remains closed. Ukraine listens carefully to what the EU says, because it is 100% sure that there is a hope for the time when Ukraine will be invited to the negotiation table. We are sure that it will follow sooner rather than later. We heard Javier Solana, that the EU is ready for quality changes, when discussing the relations with the Ukraine. Ukraine has a positive attitude towards the EU and will work hard to attain membership.

Judith Gebetsroithner: European Neighborhood Policy – Propositions for Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus.

Since the enlargement one year ago, there has been a shift in the politics of the European Union to the East. Having overcome the painful division in Europe, we did not want to create new ones. Therefore, we saw the need to protect the area of stability, prosperity and security beyond our actual members and created a new tool, the European Neighborhood Policy, to achieve this goal.

The EU's principle foreign policy objective is to promote stability, security and prosperity globally. This global commitment entails that we are also interested in creating a space of mutual values: democracy, rule of law and human rights in our immediate neighborhood. Such values are also essential for human and economic development and thus for security and political stability. Thus, we decided to offer our Eastern and Southern neighbors a mutually beneficial deal.

EU proposition for Ukraine

The most important question is that of Ukraine's accession perspective. The neighborhood policy does not offer such a perspective. The situation is very clear. You need unanimity in the Council to start accession negotiations. The best any country, including Ukraine, that wants a European perspective can do is to start or continue the reform process and to fulfill the Action Plan. All actions completed in the framework of these plans have the goal of tightening our economic partner states or candidates to the EU membership. The president of Ukraine introduced his point of view in an exceptionally realistic way, stating that Ukraine itself must work very hard on economic and political transformation, where the role of the EU is to help and support. Ukraine has much detailed work to do, as the country is internally divided. The continuation of the reform process is important for the quality of life and for the welfare of the citizens of Ukraine. The EU wants to see concrete progress, actual reform steps, on the basis which the EU might enable, access to its area through the easing of visa requirements or access to the EU market.

The Union acted immediately as the Action Plan for Ukraine had already been negotiated and was ready for adoption. We could not do it before because it was conditional on the democratic election of a government. Thus, the Commissioner and Solana together developed the 10-point plan for intensifying contacts and squeezed in a council with Ukraine to start the adoption of the Action Plan. The Commissioner has already been to Ukraine three times since the events to discuss how to continue implementation of the plan and to listen to the key priorities of Ukraine and the new government. The ten point Action Plan was adopted according to these priorities.

The granting of market economy status, which is very important for Ukraine, has proven to be quite difficult. After the Commissioner came back from her first visit, we thought that it would go very fast, but indeed it's been like a slow-moving ship. We are still confident, however, that some technical problems can be dealt with, so that market economy status can be granted to Ukraine rather soon.

Visa facilitation, which is a key priority for Ukraine, will send a strong signal of partnership and friendship to the Ukrainian people. We are also working intensely on WTO member status and the free trade area.

EU propositions for Moldova

The current Action Plan (formally accepted on 22 February 2004), which is currently being executed, will be unusually important from the point of view of strengthening of EU-Moldova relationship. Among the Moldavian problems, the most important is the Transdniestr conflict.

We hope that the establishment of the special EU representative on Transdniest conflict and goodwill on both the Ukrainian and Moldavian side will help to find the solution of this conflict. The EU is doing everything in its power to help the border management. The basic issue is the possibility of creating with the EU and Moldova a cooperative system of border control. The goal is to create stability in a region and good mutual relations between Ukraine and Moldova, both of whom must yield to cooperation, which is crucial from the economic point of view. Russia has a key role in settling the Transdniestr conflict, because it is not simply a bi-lateral conflict. In order to help the EU-Moldovian Action Plan, the attitude of the Commission delegation will be exceptionally important. Representative of the Commission are already in Kiev, and will shortly begin its actions in Chisnau.

EU proposition for Belarus

Belarus would be a natural partner for Poland, if they were allowed to participate in that function. Of course, the EU naturally may offer to Belarus the same that was offered to

Ukraine and Moldova with the goal of promoting stability and welfare. The EU would prefer that Belarus respected the rule of law and human rights. The EU would like to see if Belarus would enter the family of democratic and stable states, with the corresponding economic success. The EU actions support strengthening human rights, independent democratic forces, and independent media.

Currently, the EU offers help through the project Tacis, which, in agreement with EU principals, can only be executed in cooperation with the government actions. The EU decides how to finance Tacis, which funds actions in cooperation with the target country. The majority of help goes directly towards projects, which are distributed through government channels. These are important projects, as they are connected with health of society. The results of this program are very positive. Projects, such as Tacis, finance also border cooperation, for example between Poland and Lithuania. The EU can not directly finance a political party or a political campaign against Lukashenko.

The EU allotted 12 million euros to Belarus within the framework of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights, and 5 million dollars were added by the United States. The money is marked for building a citizenship society and allotted through other channels than the Tacis fund. The EU works very tightly with Lithuanian and Polish NGO's in order to identify places where the funds should go and where they actually go. In order to carry out this work, it is important to have better coordination with donors. The EU, therefore, works with Americans on this project, who have other possibilities and a less burdensome structure, which can directly finance political parties. We don't want to do this. For that reason, we help Americans to do what they can and we work in a specialized and more local areas, for example with NGO's. Of course, this work is outside the normal party apparatus. Belarusian citizens must know, that the EU hasn't forgotten about them. An additional, very important matter is creating young people a chance to leave for studies to EU countries. Currently, I am checking out how the University for Belarussians in Lithuania could be financed by the EU, despite our internal structural difficulties.

Vyachaslau Pazdnyak: Belarusian Expectations regarding EU Integration.

In Belarus it is possible to discern three types of changes. Firstly, there are changes between Belarus and the EU. Secondly, there are political shifts on the international scene. Finally, there is a psychological change in the Belarusian opposition, society, and in their relationship to the EU.

The idea of Belarus as a EU member exists for more than 10 years, but if one considers political campaigns, it is a priority only from 2003/2004. The idea was, the part of the coalition titled “Free Belarus,” as well as similar documents from the program of Unified Citizens Party. The European coalition “Free Belarus” treats accession to the EU equally as a strategic goal and as a political technology to unite the heterogeneous and amorphous anti – Lukashenko electorate to build a majority democratic coalition, which would be able to gain victory. This approach suggested that Belarus might join the EU under special conditions, without fulfilling the criteria of membership. From this point of view, the Unified Citizens Party introduced a two-phase program, which makes up a road for Belarusian membership in the EU. The Unified Citizens Party proposed a strategy supporting standard accession procedures.

The conception for EU-Belarusian relationship, seen from the opposition and the official government point of view are 180 degrees apart. The Belarusian leadership sees within the European Neighborhood Policy only careless policies. The opinion of the leadership is that this plan only has negative effects on Belarus. With the current political regime, the European Neighborhood Policy does not have a chance for success, unless it is modified to the government's demands, but than it will be the Belarusian neighborhood policies, not European. The opposition, at the same time, describes the EU as having a limited role to play in initiating changes in Belarus, as the policies of the EU are not designed to affect revolutionary change.

Democratic opposition believes that currently the EU might help by supporting a separate democratic movement, initiated by citizens through a non-governmental organization. This organization will build infrastructure for future democratic changes, attempting to overcome problems of a controlled media, which currently exists. Additionally, the EU could create a helpful international climate for promoting a democratic movement and unifying the opposition forces in Belarus. One can see, that the expectation of opposition are becoming more realistic and, at the same time, more limited.

The situation in Belarus demands a few very important actions. Unfortunately, to this time, there have not been such changes supported by the EU, despite the fact that the Commission as well as other EU structures are speaking more loudly about their demands. Of course, this requires lots of time. Much work remains and it depends on actions of the resolutions of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament declarations as well as the creation of an EU Action Plan today in regards of the matter of Belarus. Further, documents approved by the OSCE initiated better coordination with the US. In spite of this, the expectations are for concrete actions. Declarations and symbolic actions of the EU are very

important, but have some negative consequences. Domestically these actions aggravate greater oppression. Leadership effectively pronounces that they won't allow further flower revolutions in its country, which are externally directed, such as actions from the EU and other subjects, who deluge millions seeking change. The further negative consequence is to shock Russia; they are made aware they risk losing their remaining ally. For these reasons, the EU rhetoric should be subdued in favor of bona fide political support.

The conception of competing between integration options – between Russia and the EU - has been discarded. Such competition does not exist, neither in practice nor in theory. A loose integration with Russia exists, but the integration process with the EU fails to commence. We can only describe a rather cohesive, rather pro-democratic politics in the EU with respect to Belarus. It should be noted that opposition forces are worn down, waiting for EU actions and its members to provide active support in Belarus.

A definite change is occurring within the opposition. A few political forces no longer exist, and in their place new ones are formed, new coalitions. A few of them are begin to compete with the old opposition. In Belarus there is many-dimensional competition. For the 5+ coalition, which practically no longer exists, because Belarusian Workers Party has been closed down by the regime, a potential competitor it is a larger 10+ coalition. Further, competition builds between the 10+ coalition and the new presidential candidates, which are not yet recognized through a large portion of the “old guard” opposition. The changes cause the opposition to better analyze what is going on in and around Belarus.

Belarusian opposition does not have the complete picture regarding the organizational structure domestically and on its borders. It regards to organizations, working to ensure not only information but also monitoring of the political situations. The EU is lacking knowledge regarding eventual partners in Belarus, with which it would be possible to develop a partnership and create informal structures. There is a base of sources, including internet international sources such as the United Way, but they are ineffective and outdated. The EU, in an unavoidable method, must build an index of available political actors, which is not a simple task. The most important, however, is the creation of an alternative system of political communication. Only such a system supported by radio stations and programs would be an effective instrument and have significant meaning in promoting the growth of political awareness, public initiatives, and the growth of political actions and organizations in Belarus. Without media, the population fails to understand what, exactly is happening. The EU must equally pay attention to ensuring positive information in Belarus in the area of quality of life and the development of the situation in the EU, especially in regards to changes which develop among the EU members.

The Belarusian state is a leader in the area of manipulation of information and the information technology, and especially in regards to the internet, which could be seen in the last election campaign. The use of these communication technologies and information technology through political actors and people from the so-called third sector shows that is simply not enough. Therefore, the opposition would happily use experiences from Ukraine and other neighboring countries. The transfer of this knowledge should showing how to make the best use of technological tools in the political arena, which will be unusually important in the time of shortly upcoming election.

Jakub Boratynski: Closing remarks.

In Poland, there is consensus to support democratic transformation that is currently embracing the political world and non-governmental organizations. In Poland, still exists the need to develop an effective method of helping countries undergoing democratic transformation. Help and sharing experience has an exceptionally important role. Moreover, such help can positively affect Poland's role in shaping the new EU policy regarding its neighboring countries. A proposition exists that there are models for democratizing countries that can be imitated and copied, without the need for developing a unique model for each country.

In the Ukrainian situation, in spring of the next year, it will be possible to consider mutual relations with the Ukraine in the long term. If Ukrainians do succeed in sticking to the EU-Ukraine Action Plan, according to that, it will be possible to consider signing a partnership agreement. Negotiations in this matter could last to the end of 2008. One of the priorities of the program of cooperation with the EU is the question of easing the visa requirements. This could influence on mutual changes in the EU and Ukrainian image.

In Belarus there will be a presidential election in the upcoming year. This will be a enormous challenge for the opposition, if they succeed, as they described, in establishing a common opposition candidate. This will also be a test for the EU, as they will treat the issue of the presidential election. In supporting Belarus, the EU should not distance themselves from the Americans. The EU should use some flexible method to introduce the European Initiatives for Human Rights. Currently in Belarus, it is impossible to support democratic forces while omitting support for political parties, as everything has become politicized. This is a result of the lack of democracy.

Success for both Moldova and the EU would be the solving the Transdnestr conflict. For the EU this will be exceptionally important, as they will have to act as an effective mediator in the matters of security from the position of an international organization.

In policies relating to countries of Central and Eastern Europe the contacts between people are extremely important. In this area it is possible to do a great deal, through increasing all international exchange programs.

Center for International Relations

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The Center for International Relations (CIR) is an independent, non-governmental establishment dedicated to the study of Polish foreign policy as well as those international political issues, which are of crucial importance to Poland. The Center's primary objective is to offer political counselling, to describe Poland's current international situation, and to continuously monitor the government's foreign policy moves. The CIR prepares reports and analyses, holds conferences and seminars, publishes books and articles, carries out research projects and supports working groups. Over the last few years, we have succeeded in attracting a number of experts, who today cooperate with the CIR on a regular basis. Also, we have built up a forum for foreign policy debate for politicians, MPs, civil servants, local government officials, journalists, academics, students and representatives of other NGOs. The CIR is strongly convinced that, given the foreign policy challenges Poland is facing today, it ought to support public debates on international issues in Poland.

The president of the Center for International Relations is Mr Eugeniusz Smolar.

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