

ABSTRACTS

Hartmut Marhold

The European Policy of Germany's New Government

In the immediate wake of Germany's change of government, German European policy is displaying both signs of continuity and change: continuity with regard to Germany's established obligations (e.g. to the stability pact, accession negotiations with Turkey, maintaining EU budget limitations, decision-making arrangements in Berlin); but also signs of a change in policy style (e.g. in balancing larger and smaller member states, in adopting a conciliatory role towards its partners). From the symbolism of her first official visits right through to the budget deal, Merkel's first steps on the European stage – both personally as well as leader of her government – have proven unusually successful. Thus while not entirely free of problems (e.g. returning to the strictures of the stability pact), the prospects for the coming year as well as for the German EU Presidency in 2007 nevertheless offer sufficient room for manoeuvre to tackle such future-oriented projects as reviving the European Constitutional Treaty and that of the "Social Market Economy Europe".

Kai Oppermann

The British EU Presidency 2005: Between European Expectations and Domestic Restrictions

The British Presidency of 2005 was confronted with the difficult balancing act of satisfying high expectations placed on it at the European level, by making an effective contribution to overcoming the current crisis of integration, with the domestic restrictions placed on it in its room for manoeuvre. Caught in this dilemma, the Blair government used its political resources as EU President to shape the European agenda according to British priorities. By focusing on three priorities, namely economic and social policy, counter-terrorism and EU foreign policy, it identified specific areas in which, to varying degrees of success, it could make a mark. Its role as mediator was chiefly set by two issues: the conflict surrounding accession negotiations for Turkey as well as the negotiations on the EU's financial perspective 2007-2013. In both of these, Britain was literally able to achieve a compromise in the dying seconds of the Presidency. Admittedly, however, the outcome of the financial negotiations came at a high domestic price for the British government.

Ognian Hishow

The Success of the Nordic Economic and Social Model: A European Comparison

Debates on the benevolence of the social state, be they for or against, often refer to the social models of the EU's three Nordic member states. Despite their generous social provisions – or even because of them – all three have managed to achieve above-average economic performance. Nevertheless, the similarities between the Nordic models are generally smaller than they first appear. On the demand side, the similarities tend to be bigger, especially with respect to the redistributive effects of taxation and transfers. On the supply-side, however, one can discern fewer commonalities with respect to general employment and taxation policies. More often than not, the three states adopt different economic paths. For structural and historical reasons, merely transposing the Nordic model onto the larger EU economy is impossible. That said, certain elements of economic policy could indeed be adopted.

Sebastian Weber

No Mutual Recognition without Harmonisation in Criminal Law across the EU

The current push to establish an Area of Freedom, Security and Justice in Europe is being carried out on the basis of the legal principle of mutual recognition among national criminal laws and legislation. In its fight against international organised crime and terrorism, the European Union is attempting to instigate Union-wide co-operation on criminal prosecution, using the internal market as its model. At the same time, the integrity of national legal systems should remain as autonomous as possible in the interests of safeguarding the national identities. But any wide-ranging mutual recognition in legal matters would come at the expense of the citizen, and particularly in the citizen's ability to establish legal certainty or the culpability of his actions. Without a sufficient degree of harmonisation in national criminal law it seems that the introduction of common legal instruments, such as the European Arrest Warrant, will hardly be tenable. To that extent, mutual recognition and harmonisation of national criminal laws presuppose each other and can therefore only be implemented in a reasonable way if the European Union first satisfies the requirements of a state operating under the rule of law.

Marek A. Cichocki

Poland after the Elections: The Foreign Policy Priorities of the New Government

With the coming to power of Poland's Party of Law and Justice (PiS), a party that has so far concentrated almost exclusively on domestic affairs has now also assumed responsibility for foreign policy. Nevertheless, the government's first forays on the international stage demonstrate a large degree of continuity in foreign and European affairs. Before accession, the main priorities of Polish foreign policy were membership of NATO and the EU. In the period after accession, a new set of interests is emerging that, irrespective of party political differences, has become decisive. These are an active role in shaping the Eastern dimension of the Union, the consolidation of a stronger role for Poland within the EU, through forming variable coalitions, and a modification of its co-operative role with the USA.

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