



12TH MEETING OF PRESIDENTS OF PARLIAMENTS
OF THE REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP+ COUNTRIES
WARSAW, 4-5 NOVEMBER 2010



Information on the Meeting¹

On November 4th and 5th 2010, the Polish Senate will host the 12th Meeting of Speakers of Parliaments of Regional Partnership Countries, i.e. Austria, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary (Partnership members), plus (+) countries regularly invited to the meetings, i.e. Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia.

In 2011, two member states of the Regional Partnership, i.e. Hungary and Poland, will hold the European Union rotating presidency. For that reason this year's parliamentary summit of the Partnership, held in Warsaw just two months shy of the commencement of the Hungarian presidency, will hold a debate on energy security and the EU Eastern Partnership, as both presidencies intend to draw the attention of all Member States to those particular issues.

The debate on the former issue shall be opened by European Commissioner for Energy, Mr. Günther Oettinger. Waldemar Pawlak, Minister of Economy and Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, will supplement the Commissioner's speech from the perspective of the future Polish EU presidency 2011.

On the following day, the debate on the EU Eastern Partnership will be opened by Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

The introductory speech given by the representatives of EU and Polish executive bodies will be followed by a debate initiated by the speakers of parliaments of Hungary and Poland, i.e. the countries to preside over the EU Council next year. The debate will be summed up by a joint statement of the meeting participants.

Both topics of the 12th Meeting of the Presidents of Parliaments of Regional Partnership Countries are of interest not only to next year's presidencies of the EU, but to Central Europe as a whole. Energy security as well as Eastern policy of the European Union represent critical issues for further European integration.

In addition to common market and sustainable development (including preventing climate changes), energy security is one of the pillars of EU energy policy. It should be mentioned here that post-war European integration was built on European Coal and Steel Community (1951) as well as European Atomic Energy Community (1957)².

¹ Information on previous meetings of the Presidents of Parliaments of Regional Partnership Countries is available at the website of the Centre for European Information and Documentation (OIDE) at the Library of the Polish Sejm under the following URL: <http://libr.sejm.gov.pl/oide/index.php?topic=international&id=partnerstwo>

² An amended version of the *Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community* of 1957 still constitutes part of the binding primary law of the EU.

Energy security, deemed of little importance several years ago, was recognised by the general public mainly as a result of oil crises of the 70s resulting from OPEC policy (*Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries*).

In recent years, the EU has become increasingly dependent on external suppliers of ever more expensive oil and gas. While own supplies are dwindling, the demand for energy is rising. According to the estimates of the European Commission, in the next 20-30 years EU's dependence on imported energy resources is going to rise from the current level of approx. 50% to approx. 70%, and the majority of this import is going to come from Russia.

The EU had not been aware of the severity of the situation until the conflict between Ukraine and Russia at the beginning of 2009 resulted in a gas supply crisis.

The number of initiatives on common energy policy, which has been gaining in significance, has increased since European Union enlargements of 2004 and 2007. The policy is supported strongly by Article 194 (Title XXI) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union first introduced in the Treaty of Lisbon (1.12.2009), and entitled *Energy* as well as Article 170 (Title XVI) entitled *Trans-European Networks*, already incorporated into the Maastricht Treaty (1.11.1993).

At the extraordinary meeting of the European Council on energy, held on 4 February 2011 in Brussels, under the Hungarian presidency, a decision will be made on the final shape of the European Energy strategy for 2011-2020, which has been in discussions since early spring this year, based on the initial European Commission proposal³. At present, the European Parliament is finalising its report on this Commission proposal⁴. Based on the discussions held so far, the European Commission will publish a communication under the working title "Energy 2020 - Strategy for competitive, sustainable and safe energy" in early November 2010. An initial guideline debate on the aforementioned document is planned at the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (TTE) meeting on 2 December this year. The objective will be to prepare the ground for an in-depth analysis of the Strategy before the European Council meeting in February 2011.

As part of preparations to the Hungarian presidency, a delegation of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy of the European Parliament will pay a visit to the Hungarian National Assembly in late November this year in order to discuss cooperation in the field of energy.

During its presidency, Poland will follow up the Belgian and Hungarian presidencies programme concerning the Energy Infrastructure Package. Work on the package will start on 2 December this year at the aforementioned TTE Council meeting. The main part of discussion on individual documents should be completed by the beginning of the Polish presidency. Based on the conclusions from the discussion, the European Commission will propose a legislative bill in mid-2011, which will contain proposals for regulations regarding a new financial instrument for energy infrastructure amending the existing TEN-E.

In addition, in order to strengthen the external energy policy of the EU, based on the treaty provisions, Poland will aim at strengthening EU mechanisms that would allow increased effectiveness of EU external action in the area of energy. Firstly, in 2011 an in-depth debate should be conducted to examine EU needs and capabilities in this area. The debate should be based on reports related to this dossier prepared in parallel by the European Commission and Poland for mid-2011.

In view of the above, Poland would like to stress that energy security depends primarily on the efficient operation of the internal market (based on clear and properly implemented regulatory framework and appropriately developed energy infrastructure); joint solidarity mechanisms that would allow preventing and proactive measures in the event of supply crisis (in the gas sector which is particularly sensitive to supply crisis, such mechanisms will be established by a regulation on gas supply security), as well as effective instruments of external energy policy, in particular by leveraging EU potential⁵.

³ On 7 May 2010, the European Commission published a document entitled "Towards a New Energy Strategy for Europe 2011-2010" - a draft version of a strategic document pointing to priority areas and proposed actions.

⁴ Deputy Lena Kolarska-Bobińska from Poland is the Rapporteur of the Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy on this issue.

⁵ According to the study recently published by Kościuszko Institute, entitled [Poland's Energy Security 2010. Opening Report](#) (available only in Polish), Poland faces an undisputed threat as regards gas supplies. According to the experts of the Institute, there are no such threats concerning oil supplies.

Within the external framework of its energy policy, the European Union:

- conducts intensive dialogue with multiple countries and regions of the world which are main energy suppliers,
- stabilises neighbouring energy markets by implementing such measures as expanding common commodity market principles based on *acquis communautaire*, and through such instruments as Energy Charter Treaty (ratified in December 1994), Energy Community (of South-Eastern Europe) (established in October 2005), Eastern Partnership (created in May 2009 – platform No. 3 on energy), Black Sea Synergy (created in April 2007), etc.
- develops transnational infrastructure that integrates energy markets on regional as well as EU scale, thus diminishing dependence of the cooperating countries on third country suppliers, by implementing Trans-European energy network policy (in particular transmission infrastructure and warehouse facilities).

On 24 February 2010, a V4+ Energy Security Summit was held in Budapest on the initiative of the Visegrad Group. It was attended by high-level representatives of Central, Eastern and South-East European countries as well as important international stakeholders⁶. The summit debate, summarised in a comprehensive Declaration, was an important step towards creating a regional Central-European energy market. It led to projects aimed at enhancing Central-European energy infrastructure, which gained the support of the European Commissioner for Energy, Günther Oettinger. The two 2011 EU presidencies, Hungarian and Polish, should play a key role in promoting these projects.

On 5 May 2010, on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, which was announced on 9 May 1950 and concerned coordination of coal and steel production of West Germany and France, incumbent President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek and former President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, launched the European Energy Community. The EEC idea is based on a report prepared by J. Delors' think-tank *Notre Europe*, which provides arguments for creating a "true" European Energy Community. Such a "true" EEC would use integrated networks, would be adjusted by price stabilisation tools and supplemented by the innovation policy.

Following a Polish-Swedish initiative, the Eastern Partnership Programme was launched on 7 May 2009 in Prague, during the Czech presidency, at the summit of EU heads of state and parliaments as well as countries participating in the programme. 7 November 2010 will mark exactly 1.5 year anniversary of that initiative. Along with the Southern Dimension, this programme is one of the cornerstones of the European Neighbourhood Policy and is especially important for Central European states.

The last EU Foreign Affairs Council, held on 25 October 2010 in Luxembourg, evaluated favourably the past achievements of the Eastern Partnership programme, and called for its further acceleration.

On 6 October 2010, Foreign Affairs Ministers of Poland and Sweden, Radosław Sikorski and Carl Bildt, issued a letter to Baroness Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, First Vice-President of the European

⁶ The meeting was attended by governments of eleven countries, including four Visegrad Group states: the Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Poland, as well as seven states of the region: the Republic of Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Slovenia and Romania.

Commission responsible for External Relations and Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy. In their letter, they emphasised the importance of the European Neighbourhood Policy and, within its framework, of the Eastern Partnership programme.

During the Hungarian presidency, on 26 May 2011, the second Eastern Partnership Summit will be held in Budapest (after the first Prague summit). The Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, Donald Tusk, has been invited by the Hungarian side to co-host the summit.

Prior to the summit, on 5-6 May 2011, Budapest is going to hold the Conference of Foreign Affairs Committee Chairpersons of the EU Parliaments to take up the debate on the Eastern Partnership, EU's enlargement to include Croatia and on promoting the European integration of West Balkan states.

In the framework of its EU presidency and in cooperation with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Poland is going to promote issues connected with the Eastern policy. In the context of relations with Eastern Partnership countries, Poland shall strive to conclude association agreements, adopt mandates for negotiations concerning the creation of free-trade zones with the EU as well as finalise such talks with Ukraine. It shall support visa and trade liberalisation and intensifying economic cooperation. Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, established in November 2009 in Brussels, is scheduled to take place in October 2011 in Poland.

To conclude, I would like to say a few words about the Regional Partnership (RP) itself and its parliamentary dimension. Upon Austrian initiative, the Partnership was established on 6 June 2001 in Vienna by the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the host country as well as Visegrad Group member states and Slovenia. Poland joined the Partnership as a member of the Visegrad Group and Austria's "cultural neighbour".

RP is not an organisation *per se*. It has no formal structures or presidency; yet according to an unwritten principle, countries involved in governmental cooperation take turns in exercising informal presidency (Poland held its presidency in 2005 and is going to assume it again next year).

Debates within the RP governmental dimension are predominantly centred around current EU affairs. The RP activity framework is based on three "pillars": 1) foreign policy (annual meetings of Foreign Affairs Ministers in one of the RP states - the last one took place on 20 May 2009 in Brdo, Slovenia); 2) cultural policy ("Central Europe - Culture" platform) and 3) the justice and internal affairs ("Salzburg Forum" - The Forum is clearly distinct from the RP framework. In 2005, Bulgaria and Romania joined the Forum, Croatia also participates in the Forum activities as an observer).

The so-called *Budapest Platform*, established in Budapest in 2005, has hitherto been the main focus of cooperation between RP states. This initiative offers to the Balkan states support in the form of sharing the experience of RP member states gained at the time of their preparation to EU membership (within that Platform the Polish Office of the Committee for European Integration organised promotion of Polish know-how regarding the use of funding from the EU budget).

The parliamentary dimension of the RP is basically limited to meetings of the Presidents of member states' parliaments. The Polish parliament has participated in these meetings since the 2nd one, which took place in June 2004 in Prague. There it was agreed that these meetings should be treated as a forum for negotiating the position of the six countries prior to the Conference of Speakers of the Parliaments of EU. It was underlined that such meetings

should be held every six months in different states of the Regional Partnership on a rotating basis. These meetings were held in six-month intervals until 2007. In 2007 no meeting was held, and only one was organised in 2008. These meetings have also long ceased to have any correlation with the Conference of EU Speakers.

Slovakia should host the next, 13th meeting. A greater integration of these meetings with the meetings of the presidents of parliaments of the Visegrad Group could be considered. However, they should retain the nature of *ad hoc* meetings, reflecting the need for consultations between the parliaments of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe at a given moment. At this moment such a need stems from the prospect of two forthcoming Central European EU presidencies. For a long time now Visegrad Group Plus and Regional Partnership Plus meeting formula has proved to be very functional. It offers to the politicians of the region's states the occasion to meet with one another within a partnership of common interests, common aims and priorities.

Ed. by S Puzyna & S Polak