Dear Reader,

we are proud to present to you summary of the fourth annual Prague European Summit conference. At the time when the sense of acute crisis of European political community had finally withered but uncertainty remained as the EU was to become a union of one less, trust in the public institutions was challenged across the continent, social paranoia empowered the prophets of easy solutions to complex problems, disinformation on campaigns posed ever increasing challenges that the external environment submitted no shortage of either, an illustrious crowd of statesmen, public servants, academics, businessmen, journalists and young leaders gathered in Prague again to engage in a frank debate about which direction the EU should take to advance the European idea and the vision of peace and prosperity on the continent.

It was no accident. The Prague European Summit had become an established forum for such dialogue. Over the course of three days, many pressing issues of today – and of tomorrow – were debated in a variety of formats: from exclusionary populism, the prospects of EU’s strategic autonomy or the role in the Union’s neighbourhood, the future of labour, ramifications of the new financial framework to the thorny dynamic of the transatlantic relationship.

To maintain and benefit from the EU’s transformative potential, in caring for the less fortunate or the environment, both at home and abroad, the Union’s institutions – truly historical achievements in the century of two world wars, countless genocides and economic crisis of unprecedented proportions – can no longer be taken for granted. A conversation must continue of how to best adapt the EU to the new geopolitical, economic and social realities faced by European societies, and how to preserve in Europe a space for authentic politics in which various interests meet and compete, but which also allows for compromise and collective action.

A conversation must continue, and we are pleased to assure you that it will, soon enough, at the fifth Prague European Summit that is to take place on May 27-29, 2019. Symbolically, it will launch just as the final results of the European Parliament election will be announced, foreshadowing that the key subjects of discussion will include the many critical junctures that Europe is now undergoing, from the new political configuration in the institutions (European Parliament, European Commission) to Brexit or the culmination of the Bratislava Process at the Sibiu Summit. Economy and growth, external affairs, the future of European democracy and her manifold internal challenges, and innovation and technology will be featured both in the main programme and the many side events that our production team is already planning tirelessly.

Vladimír Bartovic
Director, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy

Ondřej Ditrych
Director, Institute of International Relations Prague
Words of Welcome

13:00 - 13:15

Vladimir Bartovic
Director
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Institute of International Relations
Prague
PRAGUE EUROPEAN SUMMIT 2018

The 2018 Prague European Summit was the event’s fourth iteration, reflecting and building on past years’ themes: the migration crisis (2015), Brexit (2016), the Bratislava Summit (2017), and now Charting a Way Forward for the EU. Europe has weathered several crises, but serious challenges remain for the Union and it must reinvent itself to endure the difficult times ahead. The Prague European Summit, organised by the EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy and the Institute of International Relations in Prague, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, provides a forum where high-level professionals with diverse profiles can brainstorm solutions for maintaining a strong European Union. Over the course of three days, in more than 20 panels and speeches, experts discussed topics including European strategic autonomy, defence cooperation, technological impacts on labour, the new Multiannual Financial Framework, exclusionary populism, and the increasingly contentious transatlantic relationship.

The core of the summit took place at Lobkowicz Palace in the Prague Castle and Czernin Palace, headquarters of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Three ‘Prague Talks’ were also held around the city, and ‘Discussion Breakfasts’ were hosted by the Hungarian and Croatian embassies and the Institute for Politics and Society. As per tradition, the prestigious ‘Vision for Europe’ Award ceremony was a highlight of the Prague European Summit. Additionally, this year was the first for a parallel programme, the Future European Leaders Forum, which brought together 30 exceptional young people in the fields of politics, science, business, media and civil society for networking and capacity building.
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Words of Welcome

Vladimír Bartovic, the Director of EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, welcomed participants with optimism, citing economic growth and enduring support for the European project. He proclaimed that the time is ripe for European leaders to make constructive decisions about Europe's future and underlined that the aim of the Prague European Summit is to be a part of this process by generating ideas and proposals.

Ondřej Ditrych, the Director of the Prague Institute of International Relations, acknowledged that dialogue is ever more crucial as the sense of acute crisis in the EU has abated, but trust in public institutions remains low and truth itself is up for debate. As such, the Prague European Summit provides a valuable venue for academics, journalists, politicians, civil society and business people to find ways to adapt EU institutions to an increasingly mutable reality.

Keynote Address
EU: Ever Closer to the Citizens?

The Keynote speeches were delivered by the Prime Minister of Czechia, Andrej Babiš, followed by the European Commissioner of Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Věra Jourová.

Prime Minister Babiš focused on the "many challenges" facing the European Union, particularly illegal migration and European border security. According to Babiš, "the tolerance of illegal migration" has caused division within the EU and led to nationalism and extremism. He criticized the push for mandatory redistribution of migrants, arguing that more efforts should be made to prevent their arrival in the first place through development programs in migration source countries and by bolstering Europe's outer borders. It is up to border nations, especially in Southern Europe, to maintain strict border control, but they must be materially supported by other EU states in order to ease the financial burden on nations enacting the security plans.

Babiš also addressed EU integration, arguing that further integration efforts must be preceded by deepening the four basic freedoms at the core of the union: movement of goods, capital, services, and labour. He voiced Czechia's concern over "tendencies to disintegrate the single market". Another focal point was the future of the Eurozone, which, according to the Prime Minister, is marked by a rift between Northern European countries, pushing for tighter rules and penalties, and Southern European countries, advocating financial solidarity and redistribution. Once the Eurozone resolves its "legacy issues" and stabilizes its public finances, Czechia will consider membership. He added that the next EU budget should prioritize funding for external border security, while allowing more flexibility for member states to best meet the needs of their citizens.

Prime Minister Babiš closed his remarks by arguing that euroscepticism can only be defeated by "involving citizens in the process of future development" and thereby upholding the EU motto, "united in diversity."

European Commissioner Věra Jourová began her speech by quoting Vaclav Havel, "the fact that I feel myself to be a European doesn't mean that I stop being a Czech". Thus, she reinforced the relevance of Europe as the "motherland of our motherland", with seven decades of peace and freedom, and one of the world's strongest economies.

Commissioner Jourova also acknowledged the disunity within the EU (stoked by migration in particular), a prevailing East/West division – with those in the East feeling marginalized – and a trend toward nationalism and protectionism. An underlying factor is a
feeling of powerlessness among citizens relative to both EU institutions and large businesses. Hence, the European Commission should respect citizens’ desire to let national politicians take charge, but it must also react when European rules are not respected. In order to rebuild trust in the union, the EU must demonstrate that its institutions are not impediments, but rather tools for empowering its citizens. In light of “Dieselgate”\textsuperscript{2}, Ms. Jourova presented a concrete measure to do so: an initiative to create an EU-wide collective redress for consumers to rectify corporate misconduct.

On a final note Ms. Jourova emphasized that the EU is not just a financial union, it is a union based on shared values – freedom, democracy, equality, and rule of law – which are “the glue that hold us together”.

1) Former Czech president Václav Havel delivered these words during a speech before the European Parliament on 11 November 2009. The full text of the speech is available via http://www.vaclavhavel.cz/showtrans.php?cat=projovy-
&val=1290_AJ_projovy.html&pt=EN

2) Dieselgate refers to the Volkswagen emissions scandal that unfolded in 2015/2016, when the company was found to be installing programs in their cars to cheat emissions tests. Furthermore, a 2017 report by the European Parliament showed that the European Commission had been aware that diesel car emissions exceeded legal limits, but did not act\textsuperscript{2}. (European Parliament (2017) Car emissions scandal: MEPs call for stricter and cleaner oversight. Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20170331STO69307/car-emissions-scandal-meps-call-for-stricter-and-cleaner-overight). Several subsequent emissions scandals have highlighted the need for better regulation and oversight.

Opening Plenary Session
Populism and Demagogy: Are We Really out of the Woods?

Despite some considering the year 2017 to be marked by the decline of populist parties, this session, chaired by the director of the Institute of International Relations Ondřej Ditrych (Director, Institute of International Relations) left no doubt that populism and demagogy are still prescient issues for the European Union and its neighbourhood.

As Rosa Balfour (Senior Fellow, Europe programme, German Marshall Fund of the US) explained, the notion of being “out of the woods” with populism emerged after the French presidential elections, wherein the populist Marine Le Pen was defeated by centrist pro-EU candidate Emmanuel Macron. However, this opinion has been challenged by the outcomes of the subsequent Austrian and Italian elections\textsuperscript{1}, which showed that populism is still gaining followers, meaning that the European Union has not been properly addressing the roots of its success. Balfour named three key reasons for populism’s rise.

1. Economic grievances (jobs, austerity measures, etc.) linked to globalization;
2. Anxiety about the loss of cultural and national identity in the context of Europeanisation;
3. A crisis of democracy: people do not feel heard by their governments and have lost trust in traditional political parties. Thus, a space is created for populist parties to exploit this distrust and discontent. With particular success on the political right, these parties have managed to challenge the legitimacy of established EU institutions and push forward an authoritarian agenda.

Isabell Hoffmann (Senior Expert, Head of the Research Project eupinions, Bertelsmann Foundation) added that inadequate data about actual public opinion regarding the EU allows populist parties to call themselves the voice of the people, giving the inaccurate impression that they represent mass public opinion. She explained that, historically, public opinion mattered less, because although average citizens were uninformed about EU policies and institutions, they were passively supportive of the EU. But in times of crisis, such as after the 2008 recession, people start to ask more questions about the EU and to seek a culprit for the financial crisis. Citizens are engaged in politics mainly through media, but insufficient or misleading information makes them susceptible to the influence of new political actors, claiming to represent their best interests and promising simplistic answers to complex problems. Adding to Hoffmann’s comments about public opinion on the EU, Balfour described mass ambivalence characterized by support for broad European ideals and values, including further integration, but pessimism about daily life and short-term politics. She encouraged constructive, rather than destructive political discourse to come up with an action plan for Europe.

From here the discussion turned to the Western Balkans and the region’s perspective on populism in the EU. Josip Brkić (Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina) connected populism with the controversy around EU enlargement. He explained that in recent years political discourse about enlargement has taken a negative turn. “You don’t win elections with the enlargement policy.” Enlargement is a “collateral victim” of nationalist movements, which oppose the accession of new member states. He warned that the prevalence of such discourse may push the Western Balkans away from the EU and toward other actors. One such actor is Russia, which has been promoting an alternative model of society, while the EU has been inept in countering this message. Brkić then moved to the topic of migration, referencing the keynote speech of Prime Minister Babiš and challenging his proposal to create potential migration hot spots outside of the EU territory. He stated that these certainly will not be established in the Western Balkans and that this type of political promise is an example of the current populist discourse.

Monica Frassoni (Co-Chair, European Green Party) was also critical of the Prime Minister’s remarks, calling his statement that illegal migration is currently the most important problem of the EU “fake news”. She pointed out that migrants, the Euro and the EU are often used as scapegoats to blame for local problems. Referencing Babiš’s position towards migrant quotas, she argued that the EU will face an existential threat if individual member states pick and choose which laws to obey and ignore the framework of majority rule. For Frassoni, it is imperative to reconquer the issues and create a “visible, noisy, happy alternative” to contradict populist rhetoric.

Continuing on the topic of migration, Yves Bertoncini (President of the European Movement-France) acknowledged that the refugee influx is still a challenge, but based on the numbers it can no longer be called a crisis. Closing borders would be ineffective against terrorism, yet it would limit the freedom of EU citizens; indeed, the
Cold War should be a historical lesson against closing borders. Yet the issue of migration is exploited by demagogues, who play on voters’ cultural anxiety and fear of terrorism. Hoffmann added that images can be more compelling than statistics, and that migration has become a powerful symbol, disconnected from actual numbers. Populist demagoguery stirs up emotional reactions to misinformation and offers unrealistic solutions for people’s fears.

Bertoncini then returned to the French election of President Emmanuel Macron and spoke of the positive lessons therein. First, it meant a defeat of Europhobia and a rejection of exit campaigns like Brexit. Second, it showed a will to fight “Franco-scepticism” and improve national confidence by taking responsibility for France’s problems, instead of blaming Europe and the rest of the world. Positive outcomes can arise from negative situations – the European Union emerged out of fear of war, and so today’s politicians can once again strive to build something positive from current negative situations.

Regarding potential improvements on the EU level, Balfour argued that better communication is key: develop innovative communicating structures, involve citizens politically and clarify various EU policies and their impacts. Frassoni criticized the European commissioners’ disconnect from citizens, arguing that they should travel around the EU, participate in political debates, and interact with regular people. Brkic added that fear drives populism, so Europe needs strong leaders who will break the fear of difference and who will promote enlargement to the Western Balkans. Bertoncini agreed, noting that it is also important for the EU to expand in order to be demographically competitive on a global level.

From the discussion it was clear that the coherence of the European Union is still threatened by populism within its member states. However, productive lessons can be learned from the populist wave: the EU can improve on transparency, communication and representation of citizens. The EU should also take care not to abandon the enlargement policy and neglect European nations that have not yet joined the bloc because these are territories that can bolster pro-EU sentiment if given realistic prospects for inclusion.

1) In the end of 2017 Austrians voted in a new governing coalition between the far-right populist Freedom Party (FPÖ), led by chancellor Sebastian Kurz, and the conservative People’s Party (ÖVP). Italian elections in March 2018 resulted in dramatic leads for the national-populist party League (la Lega) and the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S).

Breakout Session A
Quo Vadis European Neighbourhood?

The goal of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was to enhance relations with the EU’s southern and eastern neighbours for the sake of mutual peace and prosperity. Yet as the European Union struggles to maintain cohesion and European values among its own member states, and conflicts continue in neighbourhood countries such as Ukraine and Syria1, is the ENP still relevant and practical for the union? Panel chair, Rikard Jozwiak (Brussels Correspondent, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty) began by questioning the need for a Neighbourhood Policy as such, rather than simply Enlargement and Foreign Policies.

In response, Pierre Mirel (Honorary Director-General, European Commission) argued that the ENP surpasses classical foreign policy in its ability to deal with EU neighbours and that it fills a niche, which would otherwise open up to actors such as China. Yet the ENP should be more pragmatic and realistic, approaching countries “as they are, not as we wish them to be”. A revised ENP should be tailored to specific countries, even those with objectionable ethical records, rather than trying to apply generalized expectations. Such countries include Russia, with which Mirel proposed to reopen dialogue over mutual security and energy interests, and to form a continental free trade agreement. On the other hand, he criticized the Association Agreements with Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova, describing them as premature and ignorant of geopolitical reality. His controversial statements drew strong disagreement from fellow panellists.

Whereas Mirel argued for an economically-driven ENP that shies away from a values-based approach, Sonja Lokar (Member of the Executive Council of the Women’s Lobby of Slovenia) countered that social issues have not been enough of a priority for the ENP. In the case of former Yugoslavia, she argued that the EU’s preoccupation with privatization and implementation of a market economy came at the expense of social and environmental welfare. Consequently, those who suffered from the loss of robust social safety nets are now voicing their dissatisfaction through extremist and Eurosceptic movements. With first-hand experience in grassroots activism, Lokar pointed out that even as some governments move in an autocratic direction, civil societies and human rights groups remain as guardians of democracy and social progress in the EU’s neighbourhood. Lokar focused specifically on...
the role of women’s movements in maintaining the democratic nature of the EU’s neighbouring countries, citing Serbia as an example.

Although the movement is rather small and cannot achieve major legislative reforms, it has managed to prevent the rollback of certain laws implemented in the past, such as abortion rights and criminalization of domestic violence. Mirel agreed that the EU should invest more in women and young people, and highlighted Tunisia as a neighbourhood country that invested in socially progressive policies, such as ensuring equality between men and women and better education for all, which have had a resounding impact. The EU can reinforce these kinds of changes and build goodwill by aiding Tunisia with its economic crisis and voicing part of the nation’s debt.

With respect to EU-Russia relations, Jožwjak countered that there already have been numerous fruitless attempts at dialogue with Russia, and that diplomatic relations reached a crisis point after Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea. Mirel acknowledged the instrumental role of sanctions over the past four years, but argued that they should be lifted because they have since become a hindrance for both the EU and Russia. Daniela Morari (State Secretary for European Integration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova) was diplomatic about this issue, noting that Russia’s political and economic sway in Moldova makes dialogue essential, especially given extremely poor relations between the two countries currently. But she cautioned that the EU should not be the only party making changes and accommodations – Russia must do so as well.

Morari disagreed with Mirel’s assessment of the Association Agreements. She compared EU integration to a marathon, arguing that Moldovans are underdetermined by the long process to reach their goal. “The EU is Moldova’s recipe for modernization,” she stated, emphasizing that the prospect of EU membership motivates progressive change in the country. Since Moldova is a member of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), it already complies with EU standards, and sends 66% of its exports to the EU. She also noted that trade with the EU and compliance with EU standards can help reinteef CPI transnistrin 6 to Moldova, as the region would be compelled to adopt EU standards in order to increase exports.

Lokar was more sceptical about EU membership continuing to be a hopeful goal for neighbourhood countries, specifically the Balkan states. Because of the 2008 economic crisis, ongoing challenges within the EU, and the slow pace of accession, many people in these countries are becoming suspicious of the ENP. They do not believe that it will eventually lead to their accession into the EU, but rather strip them of their workforce, intellectuals and resources to which they will not be attractive alternatives for “young democracies with autocratic inclinations.” Thus, it is critical for the EU to focus more, not less, on these regions, providing support and encouragement, and a tangible path to accession.

However, Jožwjak questioned the idea that countries such as Russia or Turkey are attractive enough alternatives, economically, socially or geographically, compared to the EU. Mirel was also cautious about overplaying the prospects of EU membership before countries have fully implemented necessary economic and social reforms. He was also dismissive of Russian influence in the Balkans, focusing instead on Turkey and the spread of Islamic extremism into Bosnia and Kosovo. To which Lokar countered that most Kosovars, Bosnian and Albanian Muslims are not radical, but that the appeal of Islamic extremism stems from economic desperation, which the EU can do more to alleviate.

To wrap up the session, Jožwjak asked the speakers what he should prioritize if he were to apply for the position of the new EU Commissioner for Enlargement and ENP. Morari encouraged travel to membership candidate countries, commitment to political dialogue, and assistance to countries in need. Lokar urged him to focus on civil society and work directly with activists and grassroots movements, not just with governments. Lastly, Mirel advised him to only make truthful, realistic promises to neighbourhood countries and to visit external actors.

While many issues in this panel were contentious, the panelists converged on one point: the ENP should be updated and modernized. It should be tailored to the specifics of each individual neighbourhood country, rather than setting generalized and unrealistic expectations for all of them; rather, genuine but achievable promises to potential new member states, and support democratic civic movements.

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1) Syria has been embroiled in a civil war since 2011, resulting in a massive exodus of refugees to Europe and the suspension of cooperation between the EU and the Syrian government [For further information see: European Union External Action (2018) The EU and the crisis in Syria Bruxelles. Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarter-s/headquarters-homepage/22664/eu-and-crisis-syria_en].

2) Association Agreements are aimed at bringing countries closer to EU standards and norms in key areas: Political and Justice Co-operation, Schengen and the Common Security and Defence Policy, and Sectoral and Home Affairs, and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). In 2014 the EU signed Association Agreements with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine [For further information see Van der Loo, G. (2017) The EU’s Association Agreements and DCFTAs with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia: A Comparative Study. Available at: https://www.caps.eu/publications/eu-association-agreements-and-dcftas-ukraine- -moldova-and-georgia-comparative-study].

3) For instance, negotiations for a new EU-Russia agreement in 2008 were quickly stalled by the Russian-Georgian War in August 2008. In another example, the hopeful outlook after Russian accession to the WTO in 2012 soon soured because of Russia’s non-implementation of required reforms. Additionally, frequent bilateral conflicts between Russia and EU members, such as the Russian embargo on Polish meat from 2005–2012, Russian cyber attacks on the Estonian government in 2007, and harassment of European ambassadors in Moscow in 2007, made relations between the EU and Russia tenuous even before the diplomatic crisis caused by Russian military involvement in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea [For further information see: Schmidt-Felzmann, A. (2014) Is the EU’s failed relationship with Russia the member states’ fault? L’Europe en Formation, 4(374), pp. 40–60. Available at DOI: 10.3917/eu- for.374.0040].

4) After months of protests in Ukraine, followed by a government coup, Russia responded by illegally annexing the Crimean Peninsula (Ukrainian territory) in March 2014. The move has been widely condemned by the international community, particularly the EU and US, which do not recognize Russian claims to Crimea and consider the annexation a violation of Ukrainian sovereignty. The situation remains in a stalemate to this day, with no agreement on the status of the Crimean Peninsula.

5) Russia is Moldova’s second largest export partner, after the EU. Russia also attempts to influence Moldovan politics and foreign policy, especially through its support of the breakaway region Transnistria. [For further information see: European Union External Action (2017) Dynamics of Russian Power in Moldova. Available at: https://www.fpri.org/artic le/2017/03/dynamics-russian-power-moldova/]

6) Transnistria is a secessionist region in Moldova, but its independence is not internationally recognized. Transnistria is majority Russian-speaking and relies on considerable economic and political support from Russia, which also maintains a military presence in the region. [For further information see: Kramer, R. (2016) Transnistria Primer. Available at: https://www.fpri.org/article/2016/10/transnistria-primer].
on regions undergoing substantial economic reform? The Breakout Session B, chaired by The Economist’s Charles Read sought to address cause for concern, as well as reasons to be optimistic regarding Industry 4.0’s imminent influence on Central and Eastern Europe.

Panelist Leonardo Pucciatti (Prague Payables Centre Manager, ExxonMobil Business Support Center Czechia) struck an optimistic chord when questioned on new technology being integrated into the work force. As someone who has engaged with the growing influence Industry 4.0 in Czechia, Pucciatti believes the surge of new tech will allow greater access to cutting-edge innovations for smaller businesses. This in turn, will allow production costs to be minimised as well as allow workers to strike a better balance between their private and professional life. As a result, Pucciatti sees the coming Industry 4.0 revolution as an opportunity for not only companies to benefit from industry optimisation, but also provide positive changes in the lives of workers. Additionally, Pucciatti acknowledges the impending expansion of Industry 4.0 into most nations around the world, and how it will lead to a host of new business potential by allowing the same work to be conducted remotely from any region.

Striking a similar tone to Pucciatti, Corina Cimpoca (Founder, MKOR Consulting) also preferred to detail the positive impacts of the technological revolution sweeping across Europe. Cimpoca views the increased presence of robotisation and digitalisation as two key factors in long term economic development and visibility on the international stage. In 2017, 33% of Czech companies were already highly digitalised, and this number is projected to reach 72% by the year 2020. According to Cimpoca, the speed, scope and impact of technological developments herald a promising era of smart manufacturing, less routine jobs, customised products, more efficient cities, and improved leisure experiences. Cimpoca carried on to emphasise the need for Central European nations to seize the opportunity to develop new skills and embrace the coming change. The focus must be placed on education and training in order to engage workers, and encourage their growth alongside the respective industry.

Unlike the previous two speakers, Andrea Renda (Senior Research Fellow and Head of Regulatory Policy, CEPS and Chair for Digital Innovation, College of Europe) called for “solid nerves” from EU nations as Industry 4.0 is integrated. Renda also cast some doubt that the potential influence of this next technological revolution will be solely positive, stating “all of these changes are very ambitious, and can turn into a high profile threat if there are nations without stable governments, long-term policies, aggressive initiatives, and strategies to compensate workers who will lose their jobs.” In conjunction, Renda discussed the potential methods to compensate and retrain sectors of the workforce most affected by the industry changes, citing Universal Basic Income (UBI) and data remuneration as two promising solutions. These strategies though, should remain a secondary goal according to Renda, with the primary focus placed on the continuous updating of the workers’ skills, and providing lifelong education programs to compensate for the unstable career paths many are facing. Additionally, Renda highlighted the great risk of an inequality gap further widened as a result of Industry 4.0’s influence, with the repercussions leading to a possible resurgence of unstable governments buoyed by recent populist trends.

Michal Pěchouček (Professor of Computer Science, ČVUT) quickly labeled himself a “tech optimist”, and although he concurred with Andrea Renda that there is a great risk if new technological innovations are not implemented in a responsible manner, he foresees the great opportunities Industry 4.0 will provide longterm. Pěchouček dismissed the notion that low-paid positions are going to disappear, and in contrast artificial intelligence (AI) is going to affect more high-paid jobs because of technology’s growing ability to conduct creative thinking and dictate tasks. This mindset has also influenced projections of job loss created by the introduction of new technology, with the former figure being 40% over a ten year period that has now been adjusted to less than 10% according to analysis.

Pěchouček also expressed a need for the establishment of international laws and regulations surrounding automation and AI,
stating “To become more equal, international rules need to be implemented for everyone to play the same game. It’s a chance to boost equality in the business field by not letting big companies be the only ones to benefit from it.” In his closing remarks from the panel discussion, Pěchouček fielded a question from the audience on how to ensure these upcoming technological changes remain inclusive, which he believes is the greatest challenge facing policy makers. Two conditions are needed for these technological changes to become opportunities according to Pěchouček: the establishment of a viable economical environment, and a focus on meaningful society. Steps such as these are “absolutely crucial” to avoid a fracture between digital poor and digital rich, and increased transparency on the post Industry 4.0 reality.

The final panelist of Breakout Session B, Milan Zubíček (Public Policy and Government Relations Manager, Central and Eastern Europe, Google) echoed the optimistic tone of most of the previous speakers. In addition to highlighting the need for educational programs to be further developed, Zubíček emphasised the need for national governments to implement a “business environment able to create innovation”. To do so, Zubíček believes state regulations that have the ability to disrupt technological changes must be thoroughly examined before being brought into action, and that care should be minimal limitation when it comes to companies’ development of digital or automated capacities. Like Pěchouček, Zubíček also took on the question of inclusiveness and transparency, citing his employer, Google as an example of companies adopting a trend of open policies and increased government collaboration. There is always space for improvement, according to Zubíček, especially in establishing trust with users to create an integrated digital revolution that benefits all parties involved.

In summation, while some panelists such as Andrea Renda and Michal Pěchouček displayed some caution at the speed and manner in which the 4th Industrial Revolution will be deployed, all the speakers acknowledged the incredible potential automation and robotisation offer. In his closing remarks, Leonardo Pucciatti again pointed out the benefit of technology being accessible for lower cost, and how it will spur further innovation. Most of the caution arises with the discussion of retraining of workers as well as government interaction with companies development. As Pěchouček details “the need race to stay ahead is key,” and as a result “governments will have to pull out the balancing act between remaining competitive and minimising the impact of machines on large sections of the workforce”. With the proper awareness and preparation, the implementation of Industry 4.0 will provide Europe, and in particular Central and Eastern Europe with massive potential to propel economic growth and prosperity.

2) Civil society has been pushing to influence a Universal Basic Income being implemented in the EU. Data remuneration is the compensation provided in exchange for the utilisation of an individual’s personal data by a company, government, or other third party. Further reading can be found with the following link https://www.ubie.org/

Plenary Panel
Communicating Europe? Public Perceptions of the EU and its Reform

Several crises over the past decade have dealt hard blows to European unity and led to an alarming rise in euroscepticism among EU citizens. The union is facing a critical moment in which it must connect with the public and inspire enthusiasm for the European project by recapturing the discursive stage from nationalist anti-EU movements. This panel, chaired by Karolina Kottová (Head of Political Section, Representation of the European Commission) was a discussion about gauging public opinion and using communication strategies to increase public participation in European reform and integration.

Daniel Debomy [Associate Research Fellow, Institut Jacques Delors, Paris] began by offering some historical context, describing how public support for the EU has fluctuated over the past 30 years. Perceptions about the benefits of EU membership changed based on broader circumstances, such as war or economic stability. Enthusiasm about the EU dropped after the 2008 financial crisis, but it is currently on the rise. This shows that at times, different countries have been both pro and anti European Union, but these sentiments come in cycles.

Elitsa Kortenska, Ph.D. Candidate at Leiden University, Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs added that it is unproductive to dismiss criticism of the EU as simply “anti-EU”. Actually, skepticism is healthy and “people are critical of the European Union not because they oppose it, but because they support the idea and want a better Europe, a stronger Europe, a united Europe that actually works”. This misinterpretation of criticism as being a pure rejection of the EU is damaging to the cohesion and integration of Europe. Such a simplistic view obscures the pragmatic, thoughtful debate about the Union. In recognizing the nuance of this issue, politicians can better account for the needs of the public when forming EU policy.

As an activist, working to engage citizens and make EU policy more accessible, Kasia Wojcik (Theatre artist, Elected Board Member of the Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM25) in Germany) was asked to elaborate on some concrete ways for EU policy makers to engage the public. Wojcik proposed a literal interpretation of the adage “politics is theater”: take politics to the stage, for example by theatrically simulating a UN Parliament meeting. This opens an arena for citizens to speak and be heard, while making engagement in the political world fun.

While the panelists generally agreed that a turn toward civil society is one solution to the communication issue, Debomy pointed out various logistical impediments to this effort. First, it is simply a financial matter: the European Commission does not have a large budget for self-promotion, let alone among 27 countries in their respective languages. Furthermore, governments of member states, particularly those with euroskeptic tendencies, are unlikely to assist in such a project, and may actually hinder it. However, there is clearly a need for some method to edify the general public about the European Commission, which, as Kortenska noted, is a poorly understood institution. Citizens feel shut out of policy decisions, and thus do not feel included in the move towards European integration. She explained that research shows that citizens do not actually take issue with the laws themselves, but rather with the opaqueness surrounding origins of or reasons for the laws. There are many different channels through which EU communication must pass, so this issue does not have a simple solution, but there needs to be an attempt to communicate with citizens about how policies emerge.

To Debomy the problem is not a shortage, but rather an over-abundance of information – social media is rife with mentions about the European Commission and its policies, but much of this is false or inaccurate, which only adds to people’s confusion. He then floated the idea of “e-government”, which is less expensive than traditional media sources, but Kortenska countered that this will not reach all segments of the population. Wojcik was emphatic about the need for education and engagement in “constructive resistance”, not building abstract communication tools such as museums and symbols. Kortenska disagreed with this last point, arguing that symbols are important. Furthermore, it is necessary for Europe to re-center its shared values of humanity, freedom, and solidarity. Since the economic implications of the EU are not enough to forge integrated relationships, common values provide the symbolic and ethical bind between EU member states.
Yet in the face of division between the East and West over migration, and the North and South over economic factors, it becomes difficult to prescribe an agenda for unity. Wojcik proposed moving beyond the construct of nation-states. Instead of focusing on the needs of individual nations, she envisions politicians working for Europe as a whole. Other panelists questioned the viability of this option – especially given the current nationalist trend – though they stressed the importance of connecting EU citizens from various member states. Debomy praised the ERASMUS program for promoting intercultural exchange, and also spoke about “town twinning”, wherein people with similar interests and occupations are matched with their counterparts in different countries. These kinds of programs can dispel fear and stereotyping of citizens from other member states and promote language acquisition.

To conclude the session, Ms. Kottová summed up the key takeaways for EU policy makers:
1. Create innovative ways to improve communication and increase citizen participation through art and performance.
2. Do not be afraid to communicate about common European values.
3. Stop labelling everyone critical of the EU as “anti-EU”, and try to listen instead, as there is a great deal of nuance between “pro” and “anti” EU.

Night Owl Session
Fiscal and Social Convergence: Is a Middle Ground Possible?

The first day of the Prague European Summit concluded with a Night Owl Session, in which panelists Martina Dlabajová (Member of the European Parliament) and András Inotai (Research Professor, Institute of World Economy, Hungarian Academy of Sciences) had an opportunity for an off-record discussion. David Herszenhorn (Chief Brussels Correspondent, Politico) moderated the conversation about the intersection of social and economic concerns within the EU right now. They covered topics such as the Posted Workers Directive, further economic integration within the eurozone, youth unemployment rates, and wage differentiation, emphasizing the need for a renewed focus on the European social pillar in order to improve the social convergence of Europe.

1) This project is called General Assembly and more information about it can be found at http://international-institute.de/en/general-assembly-generalversammlung-assemblee-generale-2.
DAY 2

High Level Chat
A Road to Sibiu and Beyond

In 2019, the European Council will meet in Sibiu, Romania to culminate the process of the “Bratislava Roadmap”, a programme that emerged from the 2016 Bratislava Summit. The Bratislava Summit followed on the heels of the Brexit referendum, which served as a catalyst for reforming the European Union and outlining concrete goals for the coming years. Panel chair, Vladimír Bartovic, (Director, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy) asked the High Level Chat participants to evaluate the process thus far and reflect on the role of Czechia and Slovakia in European reforms.

Having been involved with the “Bratislava Roadmap” from its inception, Ivan Korčok (State Secretary of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic) held it up as a success for building consensus around EU priorities. The Roadmap has delivered concrete results, such as the elimination of cross-border roaming charges in the EU, steps to address energy security, and the agreement to launch PESCO, proving that the European Union is irreplaceable and has tangible benefits for its citizens. Furthermore, the Leaders’ Agenda, developed in 2017, has led heads of state to take charge of tackling critical issues for the EU, including working toward completing the Eurozone, creating a digital single market, and addressing security and defence. Korčok called this process the “Bratislava method” in which heads of state, and not just the European Council, have a responsibility to deliver on specific EU issues. However, the “legacy of crises” – the migration crisis of 2015, the Eurozone crisis of 2010, and the growing trend toward protectionism in the internal market – has left several still unresolved challenges.

Aleš Chmelař (State Secretary for European Affairs of Czechia, Office of the Government of Czechia) agreed with Korčok’s positive assessment and explained that the Bratislava Summit was the product of mounting pressure for change in the EU. The impending Brexit referendum led politicians and diplomats to realize that regardless of the referendum decision, a roadmap for reform would be necessary for the EU. The two key expectations of the Bratislava process were to produce specific initiatives and to assess the viability of innovative solutions by figuring out member states’ positions on them. Discussion is the main goal of the Bratislava process, so even if the outcome of debate is to maintain the status quo – rather than implementation of contentious policies that alienate opponents – it is still a success for European consensus.

Chmelař emphasized that Czechia and Slovakia play a special role as a “compromise machine” within Europe, acting as a bridge between East and West. For example, they were instrumental in helping reach a compromise on the posted workers directive. This was a step toward solidifying the framework of the single market, which is a priority for Czechia and Slovakia. Korčok cited a proposal by the Slovak finance minister to create an unemployment insurance fund as one of the successes of the Slovak presidency of the EU Council. He argued that this idea helped inspire the Unemployment Stabilization Fund promoted in the Meseberg of the EU Council. He argued that this idea helped inspire the matter of European defence and security, as a positive indication that a migration deal could be reached at the European Council summit later in June. This has been a consistent focus for Czechia and Slovakia who have pushed for better protection of external border controls, which was quite unpopular at the beginning of the migrant crisis in 2015/2016, when pressure was high for mandatory migrant distribution. He explained that the Vysehrad 4 countries (Czechia, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary) have been leading the call to bolster external EU borders and this has moved from being “politically incorrect” to becoming a normalized part of the EU agenda. A deal on migration will not include mandatory relocation schemes, which are unacceptable to many countries, including Czechia and Slovakia, but will instead aim to deal with external issues. According to Korčok, the European Council may revisit the question of creating centres outside of the EU to process migrants and determine their eligibility for asylum. He also voiced Slovak support for investing in migration source countries in order to change local conditions such that fewer people would be motivated to leave for Europe. A deal on migration will not please everyone, but, as Chmelař noted, the increasing external pressures on Europe will force leaders to compromise.
Looking forward, Chmelář predicted that the EU Commission and Parliament agenda would prioritize the leadership and direction of the next European Commission, the Multiannual Financial Framework, and responses to external policy. Kortok added that migration and increasing economic protectionism among member states would be central topics. Addressing the 2019 Sibiu Summit, Chmelář said it will be a “catharsis of ideas” where European leaders can resolve to do what is “feasible and consensual”. Kortok was also optimistic that leaders would be under pressure to deliver specific strategies to avoid repeated economic or migration crises in order to regain trust of European citizens. As Chmelář concluded, “Bratislava was an historic moment” and the agreements made throughout this process until the Sibiu Summit will be a success for the EU.

1) The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) treaty was adopted in December 2017 by 25 EU member states. Its goal is increase defence capabilities and cooperation between member states. The commitments undertaken by PESCO are legally binding for participating member states, but participation in the treaty is optional. [For further information see: European Union External Action (2018) Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) – Factsheet. Available at: https://reaseurope.eu/headquarters/headquarters-Homepage/34226/permanent-structured-cooperation-pesco-factsheet_en]

2) At the Salzburg Summit in August 2017, Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico and Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka supported French President Emmanuel Macron in his plan to reform the posted workers directive such that posted employees from other EU member states would receive the same pay for work at the same location. [For further information see: Murphy, F (2017) “France’s Macron Gains Eastern Foothold on EU Poster Workers”, 29 August. Available at https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-central-europe-idUSKBN16U1JH]


4) Signed in 2016 The Three Seas Initiative “is an informal platform for securing political support and decisive action on specific cross-border and macro-regional projects of strategic importance to the States involved in energy, transportation, digital communication and economic sectors in Central and Eastern Europe” [The Joint Statement on the Three Seas Initiative (the Dubrovnik Statement (2016). Available at: https://www.3seas-initiative.eu/]

Parallel Panel A

Mapping the EU’s Relationship with the US

In light of the recent tumultuous G7 meeting1, upcoming NATO Summit, and mounting tensions over trade between the US and Europe, this panel on EU-US relations was especially pertinent. Given the historic importance of the American and European alliance, panel chair Jiří Schneider (Executive Director of the Aspen Institute Central Europe) asked the burning question: is the current acrimonious dynamic predestined, will it continue in the long-term, or is this just a temporary “storm in the Atlantic”?2

Paweł Świeboda (Deputy Head, European Political Strategy Centre, European Commission) explained that scholars, such as Ian Bremmer, had predicted a global trend toward mistrust and confrontation, so this is not entirely novel or surprising. Yet the current situation should not overshadow the long-term achievements of transatlantic relations and should be put into perspective. Citing European protests against US actions in the past, such as the controversial invasion of Iraq in 2003, he demonstrated that the transatlantic relationship is not always harmonious, but it still produces many positive benefits. What is new about the current situation is Trump’s unpredictability, which means the EU must adapt to handle uncertainty and spontaneity, without reacting emotionally (as he pointed out, Trump’s tarffs only affect 1.7% of EU exports, so they should not cause panic). Europe and the US have the largest bilateral trade relationship in the world, so the EU should focus on a renewal of transatlantic relations and address the following issues:

1. Security and defence is a top priority. Western European spending on defence had fallen by 1.6% in the last 10 years, though it increased slightly over the last two years, whereas Central European spending has increased by 12% from 2016-2017. Two positive instalments in this area were the recent Meseberg Declaration2 and the European Commission’s proposal for a European Defence Fund, allocating 13 billion euro to defence funding.

2. The EU-US economic relationship needs to be “recalibrated from both sides”: address US criticism of the European trade surplus, but also strengthen the Europe’s position in the digital economy, now dominated by American companies.

3. Multilateral institutions must be adapted, and the World Trade Organization (WTO), in particular, should be reformed to be more effective and streamlined.

Świeboda concluded that the EU must endorse the position supported by French President Macron: increasing European sovereignty regarding its relationship with the US is not about being defensive or protective, it is about making the EU more confident in its own potential.

Schneider’s next question, directed at Jana Puglierin (Head of Alfred von Oppenheim Centre for European Policy Studies, German Council on Foreign Relations), concerned the evolution of US-German relations, which have taken a negative turn under Trump’s administration. Puglierin argued that it is difficult to come up with a unified European approach as long as EU member states conduct bilateral foreign policies with the US and Trump. While some state leaders have a positive view on Trump, his relationship with Chancellor Merkel is discordant. This is a marked change from the previous administration, as Obama and Merkel were close allies, whereas Trump has consistently singled out Merkel for criticism, particularly on her migration policies. The official German worldview, advocating globalisation and multilateralism, is in stark contradiction to Trump’s protectionism and bilateralism.

Puglierin did acknowledge some truth to Trump’s critiques about German “free-riding” and insufficient defence spending, despite his aggressive and undiplomatic delivery (she noted that Secretary Gates made similar critiques in the 1990s, but the tone was friendly). She specified that Germany prospered by spending little on defence and directing funds toward its welfare system. Furthermore, the myriad speeches by German politicians over the past year have little more than rhetoric, without concrete changes. She was critical of German “compartmentalization” of foreign policy – for instance, Germany can cooperate with the US within the NATO context, while keeping trade disputes entirely separate; Trump, on the other hand, compounds issues and his emotional reaction to one may affect his policies regarding
a separate situation. Hence, the German approach will not work under the current administration; Germany must be more proactive. Puglisi concluded that Germany and the EU should not cut ties with the US, but should focus on becoming less vulnerable to and dependant on America.

Petko Draganov [Director General for Political Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria] echoed Šwiebodzka’s advice to remain calm about Trump. He argued that nothing substantive has changed in EU-US relations, because the framework of common democratic values and multilateral institutions, such as the WTO, are deeply entrenched, able to withstand turbulence from individual leaders. Trump’s negative attitude toward Europe is typical populist discourse – an externalization of issues to avoid solving domestic problems, such as growing inequality. Europeans should approach the relationship from a position of confidence, as the EU has the world’s highest GDP and the biggest single market. Draganov agreed with other panelists that the issue of defence spending is not new and that the EU should spend more on security not because the US says so, but because it is in the Union’s own interest to become more self-sufficient. Finally, he cautioned against “panic” and advocated for renewal of the EU-US relationship as “it is the most precious thing we have since World War II”.

Not all panelists agreed with Draganov’s minimization of the impact of individual leaders. Vassillis Ntousas (International Relations Policy Advisor, Foundation for European Progressive Studies) asserted that Trump’s policies will have long-term consequences. The EU must stop being surprised by Trump’s “erratic” behaviour and recognize the consistency of his America First agenda, which entails “deep distain toward multilateralism, contempt toward the rules-based order, heavy reliance on the strongman mentality, and quid pro quo logic”. Trump cannot be expected to change, so the EU must respond in the way he understands: with “strength, pomp and fierce resistance”. In order to deal with Trump, EU integrity is critical – member states must cooperate, instead of resorting to bilateral negotiations with the US. The EU should move toward strategic autonomy as a whole, which will allow it to be more “strategically patient” with the US.

Indeed, according to Šwiebodzka, the EU should not get so mired in disputes with the US that it loses sight of the “power shift from west to east”. Thus, the EU should focus on modernizing its institutions (by speeding up WTO trials, for instance) to adapt to a world order influenced by China and other emerging powers. It is necessary to build partnerships and trade agreements with other states, such as Canada, Mexico, and Australia, and recognize that global decision making is multilateral, not just driven by the US and Europe.

Ultimately, the degree to which Trump’s presidency will upend the transatlantic partnership remained up for debate, but the panelists concurred that a disunified Europe would be its own greatest enemy. The EU must maintain a cohesive front and, while a renewal of transatlantic relations is necessary, the EU should also focus on strategic autonomy by improving defence and diversifying its trade partnerships. Schneider optimistically concluded that there is still hope and will to ease the current tensions across the Atlantic, reminding that ‘relations between the US and the EU, are not only about Brussels and Washington’.

Parallel Panel B
Future of the Cohesion Policy

Despite a name that implies unity, the Cohesion Policy is, ironically, highly controversial within the EU. It is the most significant cross-member state transfer of wealth, and its net recipients, most of which are Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC), and net payers, wealthier EU member states, do not always see eye to eye about the amount of funding, the way in which it is allocated, and the conditions upon which it rests. Panel chair David Herszenhorn (Chief Brussels Correspondent, Politico) brought up this challenge, asking if the policy actually breeds more division than unity, and how the European Commission’s proposal for the next Cohesion Policy will address the problem.

For Péter Balázs [Professor, Central European University, Former EU Commissioner and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary] the division is exacerbated by nations focusing solely on balance sheet figures (amount received versus amount paid), which are inaccurate and simplistic. Instead, the priorities should be to agree on eligibility and conditionality, taking rule of law into particular consideration, and to make the new proposal more transparent. Funds should be allocated on the basis of a criterion that is no longer the GDP per capita ratio but the European Social Progress Index. This index, based on fifty social and environmental indicators structured around three axes – basic human needs, the population’s prosperity and well-being, and opportunities – is a useful tool for ensuring funding efficiency.

Dana Spinant [Director, Directorate-General REGIO, European Commission] agreed that money should not be the only focus, and explained that the new draft policy will be more coherent, modern, and flexible. All regions will continue to benefit from the policy, but the vast majority of funding will go toward those which are least developed and most in need of the funds. GDP per capita is the predominant factor to calculate allocation to member states, but other factors are also taken into account, such as unemployment, education needs, and migration.

However, as Iain Begg [Professor, European Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science] clarified, the Cohesion Policy is not confined to regions below certain GDP thresholds; it is an EU-wide policy and should not be assessed on a national basis. Yet the fact remains that money is the central issue for member states, which can use their veto to block any measure contrary to their national interests. He also noted the tension between different perceptions of this policy; some nations see it as financial redistribution, whereas the EU considers it an investment policy. In reality, the policy is a combination of the two and should perhaps be regarded as a “net transfer” of funds, rather than “redistribution”.

Having personally witnessed the impact of the Cohesion policy in Poland, Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidlo (Project Manager, Pomorskie in the European Union Association) contended that the Cohesion Policy is an investment, critical for thousands of projects throughout the EU and Poland. The amount of money is not the most important factor – what matters most is how efficiently it is spent. Thus, if regions manage the money effectively they would withstand a budget cut (which is largely inevitable after Britain stops contributing to the fund). However, in Poland, effectiveness could be threatened by more nationalized control of Cohesion Policy funds, instead of giving regions independence in determining the best ways to allocate spending. Leszczyna-Rzucidlo added that messaging is key; the Cohesion Policy should be promoted as a values-based, not purely financial policy, which encourages solidarity between EU member states.

Spinant and Balázs also regard the Cohesion Policy as an investment and pointed out that the interconnectivity of the EU means that benefits are not confined by borders. Furthermore, the
policy provides funding for pan-national projects and technological developments. Leszczyna-Rzucidlo explained the benefit of “interregional innovative instruments” which help less-developed regions learn from those with more experience in a similar specialization. The policy is key for promoting innovation in Europe, which is a priority for Nicola Francesco Dotti (Dynamics of Innovation, Research and Higher Education (DIRE), Vrije Universiteit Brussel). However, he expressed concern that the policy was favouring innovation hot spots, which tend to be in wealthier nations, and neglecting “innovation deserts” in poorer regions. By underfunding such places, the EU is overlooking their potential. Thus, funding allocation should consider not only areas where innovation already takes place, but those where it could increase with the right level of support. Dotti also stressed that the new policy should avoid significant regulatory shifts or changes in bureaucratic processes (such as documents and forms) because this would be cumbersome for the civil servants dealing with administrative work in various locales. Spinant responded that the European Commission has acknowledged concerns about the complexity of regulation policy, and thus proposes to make the next regulatory document half the length of the current one.

The new policy will also improve on the ways in which conditionality is assessed. As Spinant explained, there are two types of conditions that are considered when distributing funds. The first is the investment environment and which infrastructural developments must be made for funding to be effective. The other is the need for economic governance, meaning investment will be linked to specific governance mechanisms and necessary reforms. Respect for the rule of law is crucial, as well as the implementation of horizontal regulation and shared management. The combination of these two types of conditions can ensure concrete benefits for the regions. Balázs suggested that banking instruments may be more transparent accounting methods than bureaucratic channels, which are more likely to be influenced by corruption, or biased judiciaries. As for the repercussions of not meeting conditions, Begg was sceptical about the efficacy of “sticks”, believing that positive incentives are more likely to spur behaviour changes.

However, the expectation for countries to meet certain conditions in order to receive funding is one of the main sources of dispute, particularly for net recipient countries. The panellists noted the rise of populism and euroskepticism and the ways in which the Cohesion Policy can better address these trends. Better communication about the local impacts of EU funding is crucial for combatting euroskepticism, which, as Leszczyna-Rzucidlo described, is alarmingly high among young people in CEECs, who take for granted the improvements brought about by the EU. Begg proposed for the policy to concentrate more on issues that demonstrate the added value of the EU on the ground, such as living conditions, unemployment, migration and climate change. It should also encourage cross-border cooperation and innovation, and expand from its focus on traditional infrastructure. However, as Dotti cautioned, if funds are poorly managed, or fail to tackle real needs due to complex rules or the lack of management capacity, it will reinforce anti-EU sentiment. Additionally, rising disparities between regions are detrimental to the territorial and social cohesion of the EU, so, according to Spinant, the policy must remain inclusive in order to reduce the influence of eurosceptic parties.

The panellists agreed that the new Cohesion Policy should be simpler on the bureaucratic level, but more nuanced in its approach to funding allocation. The EU budget should include stronger conditionalities (including social, climate and environmental impact assessments and safeguards) to ensure that funds are properly spent in support of sustainable development across Europe. Funding should go toward enhancing citizen welfare as well as promoting innovation and pan-European collaborative projects. Ultimately, every panellist argued that the Cohesion Policy is founded on shared European values and that it is a net investment in a stronger, more prosperous Europe.
Plenary Panel
Financial Framework Beyond 2020
Prague European Summit Study Presentation

With the presentation of the most recent Multiannual Financial Framework, many questions have been raised about the changes that will be included, and specifically questions relating to the rebate systems and the structure of the budget post-Brexit. The members of this Plenary Panel contributed their expertise in an effort to address these questions as well as look beyond 2020 to what might be next for the EU’s budget.

The Panel opened with a study presentation by Daniel Šítera (Researcher, Institute of International Relations) and Petr Zahradník (Member of the European Economic and Social Committee) titled The Future EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework1. This question and answer segment provided an overview of the historical reflection on EU budgeting, which was crucial to the study, because as Zahradník pointed out “the framework is no longer business as usual; rather, it’s an effort to construct a new financial framework in an innovative direction.” He also cited flexibility and European added value as being the key ways to deal with the constantly shifting targets that come with economic challenges and global competitiveness. While discussing the study, Zahradník reflected upon how European added value could be an instrument to overcome the current division of players and recipients, since the framework provides a commonly understood definition. He reiterated the importance of improving proposal techniques within European Commission, and the flexibility of shifting from old topics to new ones.

After the study presentation the panel began when the chair, Mehreen Khan (Brussels Correspondent, Financial Times), launched into the discussion by asking about Slovakia’s stance on the new MFF and the cuts that it proposed2. Martina Kobílová (Senior Research Fellow, Centre for European Policy Studies) was first to respond, expressing how he was not overly impressed with the proposal, because even though it is positive and well-balanced, based on the Commission’s consultations with member states.

The focus of discussion shifted to the outside perspective. Jorge Núñez-Ferrer (Senior Research Fellow, Centre for European Policy Studies) was first to respond, expressing how he was not overly impressed with the proposal, because even though it is well-done in its presentation and structure, it was moving at too fast a pace, which could cause it to backfire. A specific element Núñez-Ferrer found to be lacking was the relationship of the budget structure to respond to these challenges. Shifting towards the European Commission’s perspective, Peter Mooz (Head of Communications Unit, Directorate-General for Budget) contributed that this is the first budget that has been prepared for the EU27, and so it was a challenge to reconcile the loss in the budget with the UK’s exit. According to Mooz, the overall reactions to this proposal have been positive and well-balanced, based on the Commission’s consultations with member states.

In his response, Mooz retorted that the paper enumerated different proposals, but what ended up being presented was the most realistic outcome of negotiations. He highlighted that the taxes on carbon and plastic items was a major success from this proposal, as well as the abolition of rebates. In order for the budget to be passed by each EU27 national parliament, the Commission had to be realistic about what would be approved. This point was emphasised by Kobílová who reaffirmed the importance of the Commission putting new resources on the table, and for their part the Slovak government welcomed the introduction of a plastic tax.

Another strategy utilised in the past by the Commission as a means to access funds are conditionality, however, these have often made CEE countries feel attacked by the EU. Khan’s next round of questions asked if they still feel politically targeted in this respect. Zahradník expressed his support for this tool, which has been a means to limit ‘free-riding’ since 2014 because in his opinion, conditionality reinforces good practices. Núñez-Ferrer warned that macro-conditionality can become an issue, and he asked “If you cut funds to punish a country because of misbehaviour, then do you reward the ones doing well?”

Shifting attention to the Eurozone, Kobílová responded to an audience question around the need to have a Eurozone budget to deal with things such as stabilization. Echoing the ideas put forth during Slovakia’s EU presidency in 2016, Kobílová reiterated that building the fiscal capacity of the Eurozone has been very important, and as a result should incorporate investment capacity and an unemployment scheme. Overall, Slovakia believes that the Eurozone should have stronger mechanisms.

Mooz reinforced the ways in which the paper contributes to European progress and stability, since the Commission considers it to be an investment plan that concerns all member states. He cited that one of the ways to generate money is to encourage investment by national banks, which this budget is open towards. Ms. Khan then asked if the level of rigidity of a 7-year program means the budget will struggle to respond to potential crises, to which Mr. Zahradník replied that though it’s very hard to predict what will happen in the years to come, this proposal is generally well equipped to deal with economic shocks, as compared to the last ones. Mr. Núñez-Ferrer warned that a concern of his is the overarching mentality of the EU budget. He said that since the EU budget is an investment budget, stabilization shouldn’t be included in it. Ms. Kobílová clarified that the EU budget is not a straight line to the Eurozone, but rather it’s a starting point.

At this point, Khan took control of the discussion and returned focus to the rebate issue, which is also known as the correction mechanism3. Mr. Mooz spoke of the Commission’s proposal to gradually phase out rebates, because of the problem of overlapping rebates, which is unsustainable. If this issue is not worked out, then the beneficiaries of the EU budget would suffer. At this point Ms. Khan turned to the question of alliances, and the potential cleavages they may cause in this round of MFF negotiations. Mr. Núñez-Ferrer was first to respond, and he discussed how the groups are pretty similar, and the main difference now is the change in attitude because of the UK leaving. With the exit of the UK, the main rebate anchor is gone and so countries need to reinvent their positions within the budget. Ms. Khan continued, asking if the politics of Italy can be seen as an unknown factor in these negotiations, to which Mr. Mooz replied that the positions of individual member states will for the first time be voiced at the general council, and so it’s hard to speculate about the positions of the leaders. However, this is a chance for some of the weaker countries, such as Czechia, to strengthen their position in the budget.

The next question from the chair involved the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and the means necessary to reach a compromise for it in this budget4. Mr. Zahradník turned to statistics, citing that the “CAP constitutes more than 30% of the budget, even though agricultural contribution has dropped from 15% to around 15%.” This demonstrates the need to adjust and restructure according to the real economic power of the sector. He suggested the solution of increasing the project base concept of allocation, in order to...
The new MFF necessarily reflects the dramatically changing political landscape of the EU, with the most persistent budgetary problems relating to the UK’s exit. In order to be responsive the MFF needs to be flexible and focus upon the benefits that can come from incorporating European added value measures in the budget. This proposal is significant because it reflects the first budget for the EU27, and it is an attempt to reconcile the differences between member states and ameliorate the discrepancies between payer and recipient countries. Many issues were covered and a variety of questions were asked during this panel, in order to understand the varying dynamics involved in the Commission’s proposal.

1) The MFF is a seven-year framework regulating its annual budget, setting the maximum spendings in the EU budget each year for broad policy areas. [Further reading and information can be found through the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/index_en.cfm]
2) The latest MFF budget proposal see major cuts coming to programs to offset the effects of Brexit, such as farm subsidies and regional funds. [Further information can be found at the following link: https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-budget-live-mff-multianual-financial-framework-blog/]
3) Correction Mechanisms are designed to correct excessive contribution by certain Member States. [Further information can be found at the linked article: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/resources/index_en.cfm]
4) Common Agricultural Policy is the agricultural policy of the EU It implements a system of agriculture subsidies and other programmes. An overview of the program can be found at the following link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/cap-glance_en.

Parallel Panel A

European Defense Cooperation: A Symbol for Future European Integration?

Defence is the field in which the most progress has been made since the UK referendum. In a year and a half, the EU will have been able to successfully put together the non-executive mission’s HQ, PESCO, CARD, and an expanded role for the European Defence Agency. However, the speed at which progress has been made could be a validation of the fears about two-speed Europe, and of the way future integration will be drawn up: a French-German led initiative that other countries outside of the “core” have the choice – or not? – to join, at the risk of being left out? Is this a viable model that can be transposed for other issues? On principle, all countries who sign up to PESCO agree about the fact that the goals of its numerous projects is to reach European strategic autonomy. But how can we reconcile different priorities within PESCO, countries who see it as an opportunity to reinforce their territorial sovereignty and fight against migration, others who see it as enabling European intervention forces?

Moderator Matthew Karnitschnig addressed the fact that European Defence initiatives such as PESCO are bold in theory, and there is a risk that defence policy overall would become less coherent, buried in a quagmire of half-plans. In responding to this, Steven Blockmans of the Centre for European Policy Studies referenced “four pillars” that comprise European integration, which are EU-Nato cooperation, the collective drive of member states – or not? – to join, at the risk of being left out? Is this a viable model that can be transposed for other issues? On principle, all countries who sign up to PESCO agree about the fact that the goals of its numerous projects is to reach European strategic autonomy. But how can we reconcile different priorities within PESCO, countries who see it as an opportunity to reinforce their territorial sovereignty and fight against migration, others who see it as enabling European intervention forces?

Conclusion:

improve the development process of rural areas. The CAP needs a more evenly based model of distribution to help with this. Mr. Mooz highlighted that the new CAP reform proposal focuses on performance, and is concerned with the distribution of money. Alternatively, Mr. Núñez-Ferrer raised the issue of the disassociation between farming ideals and actual practices, which contributes to farmers’ frustration. To the Commission’s credit they are trying to change this, but net contributors are reluctant because they would lose out in the end.

With the upcoming elections of the European Parliament, Ms. Khan asked if this is a strong motivator to finish projects before the potential upheaval and uncertainty of next year. Mr. Mooz said that if the Commission is to be realistic, then it needs to take into account the potential new formation of the Parliament. Some member states are eager to finish the proposal presentation and prepare for negotiations, but this is ultimately hard to predict. Ms. Khan raised the issue of democratic accountability. If there has been a consistent critique of the EU, Mr. Núñez-Ferrer replied that democratic accountability is about being in the moment, and there may be agreements on big issues that if not ascended, can be passed on to the next Parliament in a strong position.

Concluding the panel, Ms. Khan turned to the issue of border defence, and the CEE countries’ obsession with security. How can this be reconciled without losing cohesion funds? Kubilicová responded that Slovakia isn’t reluctant to enlarge the EU budget, but the cohesion envelope is going down. The co-financing rate has increased, which could potentially impact public financing in Slovakia. Despite the country performing well economically, they understand that the envelope of cohesion is reducing. Mooz states that lessons have been learned from the current financial framework, and ultimately cohesion funding could be used to deal with migration issues, if agreed upon. In a follow up, Khan inquired whether disembarkment centres for migrants should become a bigger part of the MFF, and how it would translate into spending plans. Núñez-Ferrer was hesitant in reply, reiterating that it is a common EU budget, and as such it should reflect a common agenda. Diverging from this mentality could lead to democratic illegitimacy, and ultimately contribute to the problem of democratic deficit in the EU.
Without the presence of a clear command structure, Blockmans can see how the overlap in objectives from each project could slow down progress significantly.

Following Blockmans’ response, Alice-Billon Galland sought to highlight the need for interdependence from the array of initiatives, and how they should not be viewed as isolated proposals. Additionally, although Gallard sees the potential of the defence initiatives, they will not be enough to establish European strategic autonomy. Instead, the tools the EC has been proposing serve as another avenue of integration for Europe, with Gallard stating “it is more about capabilities and common procurement together and not about the operational side and fostering strategic culture”. Also, despite acknowledging the effectiveness NATO has shown, Gallard does not believe this is reason enough to rely solely upon the organisation without increased EU involvement. The EU performs complementary functions that brings an added value for the continent’s defence, and NATO’s fortitude according to Gallard.

Although Fliomena Chricio concur with Gallard that the new European Defence Fund (EDF) amongst other initiatives are ways for EU member states to interact on defence development, the autonomy of European defence is within the realm of possibility. The strategic abilities of the EU should not be separated from influence and aid that can be provided through outside sources, such as the United States and NATO. Chricio sees it as a balancing act between the EU’s centralised control over defence related operations and allies incorporation, with “a stronger EU in defence is one in full cooperation of it’s equally strong allies”. Chricio also considers PESCO a necessary defence addition, and does not overlap with the European Defence Fund, but expands upon it to allow further integration within Europe as well as through third party nations or organisations.

In contrast to all other panelists, Bram Vranken does not support the expansion of European defence funding, and views its integration building aspects as insignificant. Vranken was critical of the impact defence cooperation has on foreign policy, as defence capabilities are an extension of Europe’s global stance. Since there is no benefit towards developing a coherent foreign policy strategy for the EU, Vranken is concerned that pouring more money into defence will yield no impact on overall European security. The second notable issue, according to Vranken, is several issues surrounding the European Defence Fund, in particular around arms exports. If the EU were to fund defence research, Vranken sees it as imperative to incorporate a regulatory body to determine where European weapons are exported to avoid “fuelling some of the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today.” Without such oversight, defence development could risk a negative impact on conflicts around the world which in turn could reduce European security.

Providing a Central European perspective to the discussion, Jan Macháček first sought to reiterate the support for EU defence strengthening from the region, and denounced any sympathetic ties to Russia, a country with more influence over Eastern EU member states. Furthermore Macháček praised the role of NATO both in its creation of overarching policy that has assisted European security and on a lower level of supporting individual member states. While EU based initiatives are positive, Macháček believes funds should be diverted to improving NATO’s capabilities first since its structure is readily established and fully functional.

Macháček’s comments lead smoothly into Karntitschng’s next round of questions, which addressed future EU defence initiatives reducing the “strategic gap”, and the Union’s interaction with the privatised military industry. First to respond, Vranken claimed “there is no good economic argument for increased defence spending” when it comes to creating new employment opportunities. In addition, Vranken believes states view defence industries as a “strategic sector” of individual nation states military capability. As a result of these convoluted intentions, Vranken is skeptical about the European Defence Fund’s positive impact.

In her rebuttal, Chricio defended the European Defence Fund’s objectives, and reiterated that it is the choice of member states to decide whether they invest more into their respective defence industries or not. Cross-border cooperation is required for EU wide military initiatives to be successful, and without it, countries will not have access to Union funding.

Alice-Billon Galland followed up Chricio’s remarks by highlighting the significant investment of 13 billion Euro’s (over seven years)
provided by the EC towards the European Defence Fund, and an additional 5 billion going towards military mobility initiatives. Although these sums should spur further integration among EU members defence projects, it is not remotely enough to reduce American dependency in the eyes of Gallard. She went on to reference the defence spending of Germany (40 billion per year), and a defence budget increase by the U.S (60 billion per year) as two examples that outline the gap in monetary backing the European Defence Fund receives compared to what it would need to establish European strategic autonomy.

With Gallard questioning the role of the U.S in European defence initiatives moving forward, the next audience question dealt with the topic of recent populist movements in powerful nations, such as the United States, and any subsequent influence they may have. As the strongest proponent of NATO on the panel, Macháček supported the integration of U.S support in European defence, but noted the difference between the two. He stated, “the EU should have the ambition to combine agenda’s and negotiate with the US while operating independent EU defence initiatives” defining the separate goals involving solely member states as well as outside nations. Macháček also supported his stance by discussing the high grade weaponry available for purchase from the United States. This hardware can both serve as effective military tools, but additionally could take advantage of the current political climate in the U.S, with Macháček referencing the sympathetic nature of the sitting American president towards nations that appeal to U.S industry support.

It is still up for debate whether the positive advancements made on European Defence integration will be reflected in EU troop deployment abroad, or the creation of “battle groups” and a cohesive military infrastructure. While the panelists present an array of varying viewpoints, all were in agreement that this defence cooperation will only aid in strengthening the EU's resolve as a collective. Through the support of allies and continued technological development, EU Defence initiatives could serve as the birth of an effective interstate military, which would spur further interdependence, cooperation, and a stronger European presence in global affairs.

1) The European Intervention Initiative (EII) is a joint military project between 9 European countries outside of existing both North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union’s (EU) Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) structures. EII is planned to operate a “light” permanent secretariat based on the network of military liaison officers with the French defence ministry.
2) The European Defence Fund is a fund managed by the European Union (EU) for coordinating and increasing national investment in defence research and improve interoperability between national forces. It was proposed in 2016 by President Jean-Claude Junker and established in 2017. The fund has two stands; research (€390 million until the end of 2019 and €500 million per year after 2020) and development & acquisition (€500 million in total for 2019-20 then €1 billion per year after 2020)
3) The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, also called the North Atlantic Alliance, is an intergovernmental military alliance between 29 North American and European countries.
4) In July 2018, The European Commission announces that the budget for 2021-2027 will be €19 billion. Figure released via http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-4121_en.htm

Parallel Panel B
Spitzenkandidaten: Shaping EU for the Future

The debate about the future of the EU is partially premised on the idea of improving responsive-ness of representative democracy at the European level. The EU’s response to this challenge will in part define the future of European integration. The introduction of the “Spitzenkandidaten” system before the 2014 EP election was one of the steps to make the EU more responsive. Given its polarising effect, a number of questions remain: will the system be repeated and how should it be improved if it is supposed to stay? Should the EU go further and link the election of a (joint) EU president to the outcome of the EP elections? Or should the heads of state and government try to marginalise it?

The Spitzenkandidaten process is the idea to have a lead candidate from the European political parties, and the candidate that finishes ahead in the election becomes the President of the European Commission. The original idea for this process came from Martin Schultz, and it will be applied to the next European elections. The European Commission argues in favour of the Spitzenkandidaten process, because it strengthens the connection with citizens and opens the way for more political participation. It also brings more transparency to the appointment process of EU institutions, as European nationals can have a more direct say in the political process. However, this process raises a lot of questions, such as if this is the right way to engage voters and legitimise institutions, and if this process can work without transnational lists.

Moderator Eric Maurice kicked off the panel discussion by questioning the success of the Spitzenkandidaten process so far, with Boris Zala highlighting its effectiveness from a large-scale perspective. When looking at the big picture, then it is important because it could be linked to the general reform of EU institutions. Echoing Schultz’s idea, Zala believes that the balance of power between the Commission and the Council has shifted, and this is a way to restore some of the power to the Commission. In turn, Juncker’s leadership is stronger because of the Spitzenkandidaten process. It leads to the questioning of whether the Commission is a representation of real executive power, or just a serves the Council. The answer must come from elections, because elections give legitimacy.
Contrary to Zala’s optimism, Viktoria Vajnai and Adelina Marini were more critical of the Spitzenkandidaten's function, with the former stating “It’s getting worse; whatever the initial objective was, it won’t work now”, citing politicians loyalty to domestic ties over European wide objectives. Marini followed this up by emphasising the “many other elements involved”, such as the European Parliament, which should be an institution that holds the others accountable. The Spitzenkandidaten process was introduced after the crisis as a solution to the lack of democratic legitimacy in the EU. The European Council is getting more power, and so the balance has shifted. The current mandate of the European Parliament has changed and as a result debates have revolved around an individualised level of dialogue, according to Marini. In addition, most MEPs campaign for domestic issues as Vajnai mentioned previously, and the Spitzenkandidaten process does not address this dilemma. Marini acknowledges Macron’s concept of transnational lists, which will help bring more legitimacy to Parliament, but the foundational difficulty regarding how to elect these candidates still prevails. In reference to when Macron once transnational lists were rejected, Marine states that “There are loop-holes in democracy, we just need to look at the current situation”. As a result the transnational process must not be rushed into in the eyes of Marini.

In tandem with the complex processes behind the Spitzenkandidaten there is difficulty surrounding divergence of interpretation, particularly in relation to the role of the European Commission’s President. In response, Nicolai Von Ondarza sees it as natural for the EU to have constructive illegitimacy. The Spitzenkandidaten process is itself very ambiguous. The key to this principle in the eyes of Ondarza is the idea that the President of the Commission has to find the proposal in the EU Parliament. It is intentional ambiguity as there is a constant struggle between parties and the European Council that never results in a homogenous solution, but often leads to a compromise. Ondarza also sought to deal with the discussion around sustainability of projects like Spitzenkandidaten, a mindset he was critical of. Utilising domestic European political mechanisms as an example, Ondarza points out the common presence of fragmented party systems, stating “because of this almost all governments in Europe are the result of negotiations”.

The questions surrounding this new political concept for the EU should not address its lifespan, and instead must focus on ways to improve upon the framework provided thus far, according to Ondarza. Pivoting the debate back towards a topic of discussion earlier in the panel, moderator Eric Maurice questioned the presence of transnational lists and their significance in addition to subsequent problems around candidate anonymity. With most candidates coming from “old Europe”, will their marketability and influence be effective in CEE countries?

Thinking so far in advance about 2024 initiatives and elections should not be the main focus for Marini, who believes it is more important to assess the outcome of the 2019 elections and which majorities will form in the Parliament. Unfortunately, Euroscepticism is here to stay, populist parties too, which makes Marini more hesitant about the next round of European Parliament elections. If they turn out to be worse in terms of skepticism, then transnational lists will come up as a possible solution again, but should not be relied upon so early on.

Zala added to previous comments on transnational lists with his awareness of the ever changing EU environment that the organisation is struggling to keep track of. Therefore, translation lists should not be viewed as a uniform solution, but merely as a small step. Zala states that “There is the permanent threat of disintegration, which is why the EU needs a full-fledged confederate system”; and so taking steps towards the Spitzenkandidaten process shows the EU’s willingness to increase its governance over member states. If a more integrated system does not emerge, Zala is concerned the EU will be stuck in a “permanent crisis”, with the governing bodies trapped in limbo between international organisation and a uniform state. Also addressing the perception of politicians in European regions not well represented on the list of candidates, Zala commented on the potential for issues to arise, especially in subgroups like the Visegrad 4. It will require increased regional and state cooperation to provide an accessible platform to all potential candidates in every EU member in order to prevent bias.

A key argument for the emergence of the Spitzenkandidaten is to improve transparency and representation of European citizens in EU institutions, and as such, there is the question of whether the direct election of the President of the Commission or of the Council is a possible next step. For Marini, the European Council President should be selected by the members of the council in order to better serve their interests, but in contrast, the Commission President must be more exposed to EU citizens. Marini is more concerned with the “maturity and awareness” of the differentiating roles between European Union institutions by citizens so that they are more invested in how the EU could better serve their interests. Nicolai von Ondarza concurred with Marini’s perspective, but was
quick to cite the ever-growing interaction between EU citizens and the functioning of EU mechanisms. When it comes to the direct election of a European Council or European Commission President, Ondarza is not supportive of this initiative. Stating “It puts too much power into the hands of the European political system and one individual”, while transnational lists in his opinion are able to integrate a wider range of European viewpoints, and could be more beneficial.

From the point of view of citizens, Zala sees the most important position within the EU as the one which is portrayed as a centralized source of the Union’s power structure. Zala adds that “whoever is the counterpart of the Chinese President and the American President for the European Union is what people remember”, to describe the weight a single figure leading the EU could have throughout the continent. Without a classical power structure, it is confusing as to whether the main form of leadership comes from national leaders such as Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron, or from the European Commission President Juncker; which adds another layer of complexity to improving EU institutions.

In conclusion, although the panelists displayed varying levels of support for the Spitzenkandidaten process there was a general consensus that this was another positive attempt to improve the connection between the European Union and the citizens it serves. While there are many obstacles to tackle, such as language barriers and accessibility to debates for more remote European regions, the prospect of transnational lists resulting from Spitzenkandidaten offer a solution to many issues that have plagued the EU for over a decade. This is a long process that needs to be continued. As a result of these efforts, the panelists are hopeful a system will arise that can establish the European Union’s influence and lead to further integration.

Keynote Address
Choosing the West: The United States and Central Europe

A highlight of Day 2 of the Summit was a keynote address from A. Wess Mitchell, (Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State) representing the view of EU-US relations from the other side of the Atlantic. First, Ratislav Kacer (Honorary Chairman of Board, GLOBSEC) provided an introduction, expressing hope for improved relations between the US and Europe in the face of heightened threats, such as terrorism, hybrid warfare, economic volatility, climate change and energy insecurity. The US and the EU are at their greatest when their partnership is strong, so it is mutually beneficial to strengthen ties and come together.

Jakub Durr (Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for European Issues, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czechia) followed with opening remarks. He asserted that the US and EU have led the liberal international order for more than fifty years based on the rule of law, democratic principles and the market economy. While there has been tension with the current administration, the US-EU collaboration needs to be improved in order to maintain global security and economic prosperity. Most European governments view close political and economic ties with the United States as a cornerstone of their foreign and security policies, as is the case for Czechia. The US is a crucial partner as the EU faces several internal challenges, including negotiating the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the EU, addressing rule-of-law concerns in Poland and Hungary, managing the migration crisis, and mitigating Russian aggression. At the same time, Europe must be better prepared to address challenges on its own by enhancing European defence cooperation. Still, the United States and European Union must work in tandem to handle the multi-faceted challenges of the current era, because, “a strong transatlantic bond is crucial for us and for the world”.

A. Wess Mitchell began his speech by underlining the significance of his presence in Prague castle in 2018 – one hundred years since the formation of an independent Czechoslovakia, the agreement for which was authored on American soil. In the early 20th century, the United States was a key supporter of many newly independent Central European countries, including Czechoslovakia, but then the US “turned inward” and abandoned these small nations. The history of Central Europe, carved up by Germany and then the Soviet Union, showed that American isolationism was a failed policy toward Europe. However, since the end of the Second World War, the partnership between Europe and the US has fostered regional and global architectures that have provided a significant degree of stability and predictability in arenas ranging from security, to economics, to broader norm-setting.

Now, “the season of geopolitics is again shifting”, and this stability is being challenged, with threats from Russia, Iran, and China. Assistant Secretary Mitchell warned that modern tools have given predatory actors new ways to undermine the Western international system. A prime example is Russia, which is using dirty money, hybrid warfare instruments, and energy monopolies to extend its influence in Europe and weaken transatlantic relations. He argued that the West has been too passive and must get serious about upholding Western values and competing for strategic influence worldwide. The US is open to diplomacy with Iran and Russia, but will “not compromise on our principles or our allies”. Assistant Secretary Mitchell affirmed the US commitment to NATO and the EU, pointing out that the Trump administration has enhanced America’s military presence in Europe and reaffirmed Article 5 of NATO, and that the US Congress approved $4.6 billion for the European Deterrence Initiative in the 2018 federal budget. He also reiterated Trump’s request for other NATO members to step up their contributions to European defence. Positive steps in this direction include the new European Defence Fund, which will supplement, amplify, and enhance national investments in defence research and new capabilities, and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) treaty, which will enable member states to develop their defence capabilities and invest in shared projects.
The defence interests of the US and Europe are interconnected, as, “the United States is safer when Europe is prosperous and stable and can help defend our shared interests and ideals.”

Then, Assistant Secretary Mitchell refocused on Central Europe, which, “is Western by history, culture and origin, but also by choice”, and now stands at a crossroads between affirming its role as an independent power supported by the Western coalition or letting external influences take hold in the region. If Central Europe once again chooses the West, it must prioritize regional energy independence and stop relying on Russian gas and turn instead to American gas supplies. He held up the US-backed Three Seas Initiative as a step in the right direction and criticized the controversial German-backed Nord Stream 2 pipeline project because it will increase European energy dependency on Moscow, thereby weakening European energy security.

Finally, Assistant Secretary Mitchell emphasized the interdependence of Europe and the US and stressed the shared values of liberty and democracy that underly this partnership. The US remains firmly committed to NATO and the EU, “institutions that form a bulwark to the old chaos of war and geopolitics.” The West must be more proactive and uncompromising in maintaining strategic influence, because what is currently at stake is the survival of the Western international system.

1) The Pittsburgh Agreement, effective 31 May 1918, was a pact between Czechs and Slovaks in the United States, calling for the creation of an independent Czechoslovakia. The signatories included Tomáš Masaryk, who later became president of the newly formed nation. [Kenety, B. (2018) Czechs and Slovaks Mark 100th Anniversary of Pittsburgh Agreement Leading to Statehood, Czech Radio, 30 May. Available at: https://www.radio.cz/en/section/czcs-and-slovaks-mark-100th-anniversary-of-pittsburgh-agreement-leading-to-statehood/]

2) Article 5 of NATO enshrines the principle of collective defence, meaning that an attack against one NATO ally is considered an attack against all NATO allies.

3) The European Deterrence Initiative (formerly the European Reassurance Initiative) is a security guarantee dating back to the Obama administration in 2014. It is a military programme that funds US and European military activities, such as training, military exercises and technological development. [For further information see: U.S. European Command Public Affairs Office (2017) The 2018 European Deterrence Initiative Fact Sheet. Available at: http://www.eucom.mil/media-library/article/36102/2018-european-deterrence-initiative-edi-fact-sheet/]

4) Nord Stream 2 is a gas pipeline, owned by Russia’s energy company Gazprom, that will transport natural gas from Russia to Germany via the Baltic Sea. [For further information about the controversy see Vinocur, J. (2018) Merkel Should Scuttle Nord Stream 2 Weekend, 17 August. Available at: https://www.politico.eu/article/putin-merkel-should-scuttle-nord-stream-2/]

"Vision for Europe" Award

“Vision for Europe” is the annually bestowed award for distinguished personalities who have, in the course of their lives, devoted substantial energies to the establishment and development of European ideals such as strengthening peaceful cooperation among European nations, developing a fair institutional arrangement of European integration, making European integration more accessible to the European public, and overcoming prejudices and misconceptions related to the integration process. The award ceremony is part of the Prague European Summit and includes the European Vision speech, delivered by the awardee. This year’s award went to European Ombudsman, Emily O’Reilly.

O’Reilly became the first female European Ombudsman in 2013, after a decade’s work as Ombudsman and Information Commissioner in Ireland – also the first woman in these positions. As the European Ombudsman she investigates maladministration in the institutions and bodies of the European Union. She has been widely recognized for her life-long commitment to human rights, receiving the Schwarzkopf Europe Award in 2017 and Honorary Doctorate of Law from the University of College Dublin and the National University in Ireland. She is the author of three critically acclaimed books on Irish politics and was awarded Woman Journalist of the Year in 1986 and Journalist of the Year in 1994.
The EU is currently undergoing decisive debates about its future, with different options on the table being defended by different sets of actors. In parallel, the EU has become markedly more ambitious in terms of foreign and defence policy, and remains a global economic actor. How do European neighbours and partners perceive these debates across the world, and what are the expectations outside of Europe? Is this perception of the EU's distinctiveness shared inside the EU's borders as well? How are the EU's identity and role perceived outside of the Union?

With the rise of an “America first” mentality in the wake of the most recent US presidential election, moderator Jeremy Cliff (Berlin Bureau Chief, The Economist) questioned the panelists on Europe's role as a geopolitical dwarf, and whether that was an accurate description of the continent's influence. Josef Janning (Senior Policy Fellow and Head of Office, European Council on Foreign Relations-Berlin) was the first to respond, calling the current EU outlook the equivalent of, “whistling in the dark”, by encouraging the general response of Europe to be optimistic in light of discouraging circumstances. Janning acknowledged the great potential Europe has, ranging from financial and economic sectors to military assets, but also pointed out that the core challenge is an inability to consolidate all resources under a single political structure to leverage European strength.

Unlike Janning, Elena Korosteleva (Professor, Jean Monnet Chair of European Politics, University of Kent) rejected the notion that the world should be viewed from the perspective of giants and dwarfs. In contrast, the challenges Europe is currently facing provide positive opportunity to incorporate change. Korosteleva cited the “Three C World” pre-strategy document by External Action Services as a good representation of how the world is becoming more complex, connected, and contested: crucial points in understanding the changes Europe is experiencing4. Additionally, Korosteleva discards the standard view of a “polarised” world order, where power is drawn to larger nation states. This outlook should be altered to fit a more free-flowing and dynamic international landscape, where a multi-order world is taking over from individual nation states’ dictating of global governance. Korosteleva is convinced Europe must not focus on becoming a geopolitical, “giant,” and instead should work on its ability to react to the new global orders being introduced, and their subsequent interaction with one another.

Ambassador Petr Drulák (Ambassador of Czechia to France) began his response by stating, “You must be strong to protect your prosperity.” Striking a tone similar to Janning, Drulák views a resurgence of the state-centric perspective with, “geopolitical beasts,” existing in the world like Russia and the United States. In this model where a handful of nation states dominate global influences, Europe is forced to protect the continent's interests against the international balance of power, in the eyes of Drulák. To preserve European prosperity, greater emphasis must be placed on developing the strategic power the EU is capable of. Drulák further highlighted two notable points of European weakness that hinder the continent's geopolitical weight: a lack of military capacity, and a lack of political unity. Regarding the latter, Drulák is optimistic in the growing ability of EU member states to provide a singular stance towards external events, such as the Ukrainian Crisis5 and the Iranian Nuclear Deal6. It is this political consensus that will give way to actual capabilities for Europe to advance its international positioning.

Despite the daunting tasks facing the EU, Janning does consider himself optimistic, but is aware of the many constraints that must be broken...
In reply to the other panelists, Janning states "We Europeans have developed a deeply rooted political culture that resembles a trading state, where politics are viewed as divergent from the normal way of interaction," which explains the reactive nature that Europe uses to respond to global issues. It is through this lack of foresight that Janning believes the EU has arrived at its recent issues regarding immigration and the migrant crisis of 2015-16. In addition, without the development of policies for neighbouring regions like the Middle East and North Africa, Europe as a whole will continue to be a second-rate power compared to nations who are more proactively involved.

Shifting to a recurring issue discussed throughout the Prague European Summit, Jeremy Cliff presented the problem of border regulations and future immigration to Europe, and inquired as to how each of the panelists would address large-scale movement of people to the EU. In tandem, through dealing with challenges on the aforementioned foreign policy issues, is Europe moving in the direction of a Hobbesian, state-centric way of thinking, as opposed to the Kantian and institution oriented 1990s?

According to Janning, unilateralism could be in the cards if Europe does not react properly to the difficulties at hand. The readiness of European society to deal with large-scale migration to Europe is limited, and emphasis must be placed on reaching out beyond its borders to solve the issues at their respective epicentres. A result of this outlook leads Janning to believe European asylum law must be reworked into a stricter system to prevent the overloading of the EU’s migrant system, which could see the quality of its liberal framework diminish. Moving to address Cliff’s follow-up question regarding Hobbesian principles in European foreign affairs, Janning believes it is a matter of perspective. He states, “Europe is seen around the world by many as the last defender of principle multilateralism,” a perception that risks overburdening the EU. Janning views the task of carrying a global multilateral commitment without support as a project that puts too much stress on the EU.

In his response, Ambassador Drulák concurred that Europe must not be placed under too much duress when it comes to upholding the global standard for multilateralism, but also noted an inability to translate such a structure onto the international level. The European focus should remain on the internal elements of interdependency, which can then be conveyed through the EU’s external actions. Drulák went on to deal with a secondary question regarding citizens’ involvement in European foreign policy making, an issue the ambassador was quite skeptical of. Ambassador Drulák cited a need for “basic legitimacy in foreign policy making”, which alludes to the limited involvement of European citizens in the practice of foreign affairs at both the national and EU level.

Following Drulák’s bold statements on foreign policy, Elena Korosteleva first touched upon the positive side effects of employing a Hobbesian view of the world during this transitional phase for the EU, with the, “teachings of the Leviathan,” sometimes proving useful. That being said, upon completing this development, Europe, and the world as a whole, will benefit more from a Kantian perspective according to Korosteleva, reiterating the emphasis on new world orders and their future interactions being the chief beneficiaries from a Kantian global outlook. Moving on to address Drulák’s comments, Korosteleva stated “I think it is fundamental that citizens are involved. They should not be driven to the brink of despair in order to be heard,” and regardless of the system or order in place, national and global governments are only effective if supported by the people under their governance.

In his concluding remarks, Josef Janning touched upon the unavoidable interaction of citizens in foreign policy, and just how much of it is already driven by public sentiment. Additionally, there is a large miscommunication with the public in Europe, and one of the elements desperately needed to improve dialogue is a better discourse on the foreign policy agenda. If implemented properly, this rework could both remove some emotional elements in decision-making, and offer further insight for EU citizens.
The future development of the EU rests in the open discussion between policy makers and citizens, with the core goal to create a further integrated and powerful Europe on a domestic and international scale.

1) The European External Action Service (EEAS) is the diplomatic service and foreign and defense ministry of the European Union. The EEAS is led by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who also is President of the Foreign Affairs Council and Vice President of the European Commission, and carries out the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

2) Industry 4.0 is a name given to the current trend of automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies. It includes cyber-physical systems, the Internet of things, cloud computing and cognitive computing. Industry 4.0 is commonly referred to as the fourth industrial revolution. Industry 4.0 fosters what has been called a “smart factory.” Within modular structured smart factories, cyber-physical systems monitor physical processes, create a virtual copy of the physical world and make decentralized decisions. This virtual copy, in turn, communicates and cooperates with each other and with humans in real-time both internally and across organizational boundaries.

3) The European Migrant Crisis is a term given to the period from 2015 to early 2016, which saw millions of people leaving their homelands. This migration was primarily from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. The EU helped to house millions of refugees during this time, and many nations in the European Union contributed to the humanitarian efforts. In this period, over 1 million people were registered as asylum seekers in the EU, with the peak occurring in 2015. The EU is working to develop policies to manage migration and provide a safe haven for those in need.

4) The European Organization for Nuclear Research, known as CERN, is a European research organization that operates the largest particle physics laboratory in the world. Established in 1954, the organization is based in a northwest suburb of Geneva on the Franco-Swiss border and has 20 member states. The acronym CERN is also used to refer to both the laboratory, which in 2016 had 2,500 scientific, technical, and administrative staff members, and hosted about 12,000 users. In the same year, CERN generated 49 petabytes of data. CERN’s main function is to provide the particle accelerators and other infrastructure needed for high-energy physics research – as a result, numerous experiments have been conducted at CERN through international collaborations. The main site at Meyrin hosts a large computing facility, which is primarily used to store and analyze data from experiments; as well as simulate events. Researchers need remote access to these facilities, so the lab has historically been a major wide area network hub. CERN is also the birthplace of the World Wide Web.

In agreement with Sedláček, Lehn defined science as a totally planetary entity. He went on to add, “As a scientist, you can be at home, anywhere, everywhere, and know people in any country that you can collaborate with,” showing the power of the discipline. On the financing of workers being transitioned out of their role by technological advancements, Lehn sees the best approach as countries themselves taking on the responsibility for aiding this development process, providing the funds to do so via taxation of private companies. In speaking on future generations of innovators, Lehn left the debate on an optimistic note: “We should not prevent the future generations from using the knowledge we have, hoping that cooperation among the scientific community will set an example for other sectors of society to grow through a united global effort.

In contrast, Lehn did not agree that the centralisation of specialist institutions would damage the European spirit of diversity, stating “creativity is something that is difficult to predict and can be spawned out of nowhere.” Lehn was also critical of the demarcation between “soft” and “hard” sciences, believing that further integration of the two groups would allow for mutually beneficial input. Lehn utilised neuroscience as an example, stating “a scientist who studies brain development can offer a unique understanding that could shape future education reforms and scientific developments” to show the positive cooperation amongst disciplines. Harking again on the greatest strength of Europe being diversity, Lehn cited the government restrictions as he had earlier, being a large stumbling block for tapping into this array of cultures and backgrounds. As a result, through the removal of regulations European society will be able to further embrace its core values.

Next, Zadorozhny reintroduced a topic that is garnering great concern throughout the world, the implementation of Industry 4.0, along with the subsequent changes and challenges it will pose for Europe. In particular, the panelists were asked to discuss the capabilities of social sciences to cope with upcoming industry revamping. “We are going through a fundamental change,” says Sedláček in response, who went on to pose a counter-question as to whether the government should take on the caretaker role for displaced workers as it had in the past, or, if a planetary fiscal budget is more logical with the continued technological transcendence of nation state borders. Sedláček also mentioned the levels of civilisation according to energy, and that while we are still a “Type Zero” civilisation, there are already organisations and institutions resembling a “Type One” civilisation, such as science, the internet, and the United Nations. This supported Sedláček’s perception of planetary solutions being the inevitable direction for mankind.

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Plenary Panel
Brexit: Two Years Behind, One Year Ahead

In the final plenary panel on Day 3 of the Prague European Summit, the topic at hand was the revisiting of a central theme from PES 2017: addressing the future implications of Brexit. Despite the ambitious deadline for the withdrawal treaty set for October 2018, the terms of Brexit still remain largely uncertain. Phase 2 negotiations divide not only EU decision-makers, but the British political scene. The promised ‘meaningful vote’ of the Parliament on the withdrawal treaty has been dubbed by British media as a ‘moment of maximum political danger’ for Theresa May, who is under increasing pressure from her own Conservative Party. Wales has agreed on a Brexit deal with the UK, leaving Scotland isolated after Nicola Sturgeon’s refusal to do the same. How can a return to a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland be prevented? Is the future of Britain in or out of the customs union? Is a second Brexit referendum only wishful thinking of the Remainers, or is it a realistic option?

Opening the discussion, moderator Tim Ross (Political Journalist, Bloomberg) posed a yes-or-no question to all panelists, asking whether the British exit of the EU in March of 2019 is going to occur, or if a referendum could be introduced to reverse the course of action. With varying degrees of sentiment, all five panel members were in agreement that the Brexit process will not be reversed, and the UK will formally leave the EU.

Following this question, Ross asked Agata Gostynska-Jakubowska (Senior Research Fellow, Centre for European Reform) if the pro-European cause in the UK is on the back foot, and if there is any chance a second referendum would surface in the future. In her response, Jakubowska concurred that pro-European Tories are unable to gain much traction in administering another referendum and highlighted that both the Conservative and Labour party leadership support the UK exit, as it is what British citizens voted for. Jakubowska does though see the potential for a second referendum taking place in the distant future, which would be reliant on shifts that take place among Brexit voters. While notable changes in Labour voters’ attitude have already been documented in recent polls, it is not significant enough to have altered the vote in June of 2016. Although Jakubowska believes this trend could continue to grow, and potentially lead to a re-entry of the UK into the EU.

Speaking for Czechia’s outlook on the Brexit process, Zbyněk Smetana (Director, EEU Economic Policy Coordination Department, Office of the Government of Czechia) believes that the more organised Britain’s exit, the better for all parties involved. There has already been significant progress made in the negotiations according to Smetana, and a mutually beneficial Brexit is a very likely outcome even if the scheduled decision date may be delayed.

From a Scottish perspective, Aileen McKay (English Tutor, Young European Collective Activist) is not confident the UK will be able to stay intact post-Brexit due to the lack of representation for each of the four countries making up the state. McKay further explained the, “radical fundamental differences between the policies and ideologies the UK government is willing to pursue, and the agenda enshrined in Scotland,” which will lead to a growing gap in the identities among the four members of Great Britain. McKay also acknowledges the very fragile peace between Ireland and Northern Ireland spilling over into a possible rift between the UK and Scotland.

As a member of the British government, Ambassador Nick Archer’s (Ambassador for the United Kingdom to the Czechia) viewpoint offered excellent insight on the negotiation processes. Archer first dealt with the complicated reactions received by other EU nationals over Britain’s exit, which he described as a mixed bag. He was quick to point out the greater similarities between EU states national interests and those of the UK. For example, in comparison to Czechia, the focus on certain policies aligns closely with aspects of the UK’s planned initiatives, according to Archer, who cited future security arrangements as one common field. Through these similarities, Archer sees no reason why a deal cannot be struck that recognises the high level of overlap between the interests of a post-exit UK, and the future of the EU. A significant roadblock which could reduce the fluidity of Brexit negotiations in Archer’s perspective is the approach taken by Brussels, casting some doubt on the EU’s ability to remove, “the influence of emotional reactions,” and produce a plan based on rational calculations.
Panelist Christophe Hillion (Professor of European Law-Oslo and Leiden Universities, Researcher at Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies) was first asked to analyse any beneficial results that may emerge for the EU from Britain’s exit. Although difficult to predict the long-term effects Brexit will have on the EU, Hillion believes the ability for the member states to, “close ranks,” around core principles of fundamental importance strengthened the organisation’s resolve. Hillion states, “Brexit paradoxically has fostered integration both institutionally and substantively,” which will unify the key actors in the EU on future policy changes. While the methodology around Britain’s exit and the new challenges it will offer remains to be seen, the process can be approached with positive intent as a result of European unity in the face of the UK leaving.

The panel discussion then moved on to audience questions, with the first inquiry revolving around the type of Brexit deal the UK could be presented with, and whether a harsher treatment would influence the willingness of other EU member states to ever consider leaving. In his response, Ambassador Archer outlined why he believes this mentality will prove costly to the institution’s future. “I would argue we are not setting a precedent for everybody, and if you want people to stay in and stay engaged, you must really look at why we decided to leave,” he says, positioning Brexit as a learning experience for the EU to improve aspects of its policies and mechanisms. This position of, “sticking it to the Brits,” was also denounced by Agata Gostynska-Jakubowska, as it is not about punishing Great Britain, but about maintaining the integrity of the collective European project. Christophe Hillion followed up Jakubowska’s comments by stating “the EU should not be afraid of withdrawals,” as they fall in line with the decision to include an exit clause (Article 50) in the latest version of the EU treaties. Hillion further emphasised the voluntary choice to accede as a member of the EU, and as such, the organisation must not be viewed as a prison. This leads to the possibility for EU states to exit if their desire to remain has dissipated.

Tied in with how the exit of Britain will occur, Ross turned to Aileen McKay to discuss a more flexible form of cooperation with Europe being enough to satisfy Scotland, who had voted heavily in favour to remain in 2016. Due to the fact that they lack an independent constitution, McKay believes the independence of Scotland from the UK is the only way the region can stay involved with the EU. The possible accession of Scotland to the EU as an independent state is a viable outcome according to McKay, and she sees the potential addition as a return to the Union’s growth in the face of a notable member leaving. In a follow-up, McKay compared the atmosphere in the UK, and in particular Scotland, during the lead-up to the eventual Brexit vote, to the climate that surrounded the Scottish Independence Referendum in 2014, stating, “the quality of debate in the UK was very poor,” when compared to the, “lively and civic-led,” independence movement.

The next several audience questions focussed on the reshaping of UK’s domestic political parties, and also whether discussion of Brexit tethers the ability for both Britain and the EU to move forward instead of dwelling on a result that is now over two years old. Ambassador Archer was first to respond, declining to comment on shifting domestic politics, or a potential split in parties, but focused on the hang-up surrounding the UK receiving a “special arrangement” exit. Archer was critical of this perception, referencing the unique arrangements every non-EU European nation has with the Union, and how “probably 90%” of the proposed provisions will be equally beneficial for the EU as for an independent Britain.

Agata Gostynska-Jakubowska also reacted to the comments from the audience, and Archer’s response, concurring with the frustration in mulling over the Brexit decision. Jakubowska would rather highlight the rapidly approaching deadline for the exit, and all subsequent measures required in order to make the transition gradual. Upon being asked about any positive side effects from this Brexit process in the UK, Jakubowska sees the interactions, “for better or for worse,” as an example of exercising its scrutiny powers, and challenging the government. Additionally, she cited the increased engagement of citizens in the decision-making process as a needed change, which should reflect an overall improvement in the UK population being accurately represented by its elected officials.

In closing, moderator Tim Ross asked panelists the percentage likelihood of no deal being created in time for the March 2019 deadline. Although some responses were more optimistic than others, all five panel members predict a deal to arise. While certain segments of the agreement could prove problematic, it would be detrimental to let them hold up the overall process and would lead to a very difficult position for the UK to manoeuvre itself out of.

1) The second phase of Brexit negotiations covers the arrangements for transition towards the UK’s withdrawal, together with the framework for the future relationship. 75% of the text in the published documents has been agreed upon as of March 19, 2018.
2) Article 50 refers to the legal and political process whereby a member state of the European Union ceases to be a member of the union. Member states have had the right to withdraw from the Union under the 2007 Treaty on European Union.

Closing Remarks

Wrapping up three days of invigorating discussion and debate, Ivo Šrámek (Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Czechia) and Ondřej Dírych (Director, Prague Institute of International Relations), expressed satisfaction with the course of the Prague European Summit and gratitude for this immense organisational undertaking. Taking place in the heart of Europe, the Summit has established itself as an important European event and demonstrated that the future of the EU can also be discussed outside of Brussels. As Šrámek noted, without self-reflection and improvements, the European Union cannot play the role of a global actor. The 2018 Summit was an opportunity to reflect on several pressing issues for the EU, as Dírych summed them up: the pull of populism, the future of the transatlantic relationship – highlighted by the speech of A. Wess Mitchell, the bolstering of European security and defence, and the consequences of technological evolution. He praised the Summit for showing that productive debate is not about winning or losing, but about sharing views: “The Prague European Summit became a true agora, a forum for meeting and exchanging of ideas about Europe.”
Investor and philanthropist George Soros established the Open Society Foundations, starting in 1984, to help countries make the transition from communism. Their activities have grown to encompass the United States and more than 60 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Each foundation relies on the expertise of boards composed of eminent citizens who determine individual agendas based on local priorities.

The Open Society Initiative for Europe aims to contribute to more vibrant and legitimate democracies in the European Union by supporting the activists and civil society organizations confronting Europe’s many challenges. In a time of disillusionment and uncertainty, the Open Society Initiative for Europe endeavors to strengthen the rights, voice, and democratic power of society’s least privileged groups, and thus make democracy work better for all in Europe. We support organizations that channel active participation in democracy by majorities and minorities alike, and that uphold open society values, particularly in places where the rollback of civil and political rights is most severe.

The BMW Line 5 establishes a new set of benchmarks, and utilizes the most modern technologies at the same time, and it is a joy to drive it. IT PROVIDES A TOP-CLASS OUTPUT WITH A BUSINESS DESIGN.

The BMW division offers its services in the most modern showrooms in Prague – namely those in Prosek as well as in Hradec Králové. It is an AUTHORIZED DEALER OF BMW, BMW i, and BMW Motorrad vehicles and a CERTIFIED DEALER of BMW M vehicles. It is also one of the largest dealers of BMW vehicles in the Czech Republic. It provides the maximum possible transparency and a premium customer approach for you and your BMW. The company was also awarded the prize for the best M-Certified dealer of BMW vehicles in Eastern Europe.

The shuttle service for the Summit will be secured by ten innovative BMW 5 Series limousines, which will be complemented by five exceptionally comfortable X5 vehicles. With both the character of the BMW X-model and its sporty style, the BMW X5 surpasses all boundaries. The new BMW Line 5 has been chosen because it symbolizes a perfect combination of sporting dynamics and an elegant appearance. The BMW Line 5 establishes a new set of benchmarks, and utilizes the most modern technologies at the same time, and it is a joy to drive it. IT PROVIDES A TOP-CLASS OUTPUT WITH A BUSINESS DESIGN.

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The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. To achieve this mission, the foundations seek to shape public policies that assure greater fairness in political, legal, and economic systems and safeguard fundamental rights. On a local level, the Open Society Foundations implement a range of initiatives to advance justice, education, public health, and independent media. At the same time, they build alliances across borders and continents on issues such as corruption and freedom of information. The foundations place a high priority on protecting and improving the lives of people in marginalized communities.

The main body of the city administration is Prague City Assembly comprising of seventy members. 11 of them form Prague City Council. There is a four-year term in office. The executive authority is Prague City Hall with specialized departments and units. The operation of the City and the services for its inhabitants and visitors is ensured by 90 organizations and businesses, established by the City of Prague.

Prague is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Its uniquely preserved historical centre, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1992, reflects eleven centuries of history. This culturally rich city full of fabulous monuments charms visitors not only with its impressive and diverse architecture and breath-taking views, but also its intimate, romantic atmosphere that is ideal for long walks. Prague is a city of (not just classical) music and art, found here at every step, a city of gardens and parks, and last but not least, a city where the best beer in the world is brewed and savoured.

The Hanns Seidel Foundation is a respected global partner on issues of democracy, the rule of law and contacts with Germany. Global challenges today can only be tackled through global cooperation. One player in this process is the Institute for International Cooperation, with projects in over 60 countries worldwide. The aim of this international engagement, which is based on Christian social ideas, is to promote humane living conditions and to contribute to sustainable development by strengthening peace, democracy and social market economies.
The Lobkowicz Palace, the only privately owned building in the Prague Castle complex, is home to the highly acclaimed The Lobkowicz Collections, The Lobkowicz Palace Café, Midday Classic Concert and Museum Shop, as well as numerous elegant venues for private functions.

The Museum offers visitors the opportunity to explore the history of Europe through the unique perspective of The Lobkowicz Collections and the Lobkowicz family. Set in 22 beautifully appointed galleries, the Museum displays a selection of some of the finest pieces from The Collections, including many of international significance.

Highlights from the Museum include works by masters such as Canaletto, Brueghel the Elder, Cranach, and Velázquez; an impressive display of family and royal portraits, fine porcelain, ceramics and rare decorative arts dating from the 16th to 20th centuries; an extensive collection of military and sporting rifles from the 16th to 18th centuries; and musical instruments and original scores and manuscripts by Beethoven and Mozart, including Beethoven's 4th and 5th symphonies and Mozart's re-orchestration of Handel's Messiah.

Visitors are ushered through the galleries by the museum's very popular audio guide, which explains important details of European history and the seven-hundred-year history of the Lobkowicz family, including the dramatic story of how the family lost everything twice and got it back - twice. Narrated by two generations of the Lobkowicz family and the Chief Curator of The Collections, this engaging and informative free audio guide in 8 languages is always highly recommended by visitors from all over the world.

Since it’s opening in 1911 Hotel Savoy became a favorite place for famous personalities of historical Prague. In the twenties, apart from the well established restaurant and café, Hotel Savoy also hosted one of the first cinemas in Prague. The original preserved and functional closet next to the contemporary lobby bar is a reminder of this golden era. The current resemblance of the hotel came with the reconstruction in 2015. The magic of Hotel Savoy encases you as soon as you step into the front door, where apart from our doorman, you will also be welcomed by sculptures of Czech-Canadian artist Ley Vivot. Over the years the hotel became a favorite destination for some of the world’s greatest celebrities, including movie stars, bands, rockstars, but also members of royal families. We also often host major football clubs.

Hotel Savoy is an ideal place to relax, conduct business meetings, conferences or parties and weddings. Experience the atmosphere of a classic English club with our leather sofas and a collection of nearly 30 kinds of finest whiskey from around the world. Set up a game of chess in our Anglo-Saxon library. The library can be completely closed for your business meeting. In addition, our conference room with access to a spacious outdoor terrace is a perfect place for conferences, parties or the wedding of your dreams.

Preciosa is a leading international glass manufacturer. For decades it has brought, and continues to bring, new blood to the art of glassmaking through creative ideas, colour and our brilliant glass and crystal components. Preciosa designs one-of-a-kind, awe-inspiring chandeliers and elegant jewellery. People in over 140 countries worldwide admire its craft.

The Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA) is the first trans-european research network in the field of European affairs. It consists of leading research institutes in the field of European affairs throughout Europe, with an office in Brussels. TEPSA is an international non-profit association under Belgian law (AISBL) and was established in 1974. Ever since then it has steadily increased its membership in response to the enlargement rounds of the European Union. Today TEPSA consists of 41 member institutes and associate members located in 35 European countries.

The French Institute in Prague was originally conceived as a true university and is currently a multidisciplinary cultural center: a vibrant place with many forms, a French learning center, a cultural venue, a cultural partner and a platform for cultural meetings.

The aim is to bring the current French culture closer, to host extraordinary projects, to introduce bold and innovative works, to initiate meetings between Czech and French artists, and to develop ever-fruitful relationships between the two countries with a strong cultural tradition.

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is the oldest political foundation in Germany with a rich tradition in social democracy dating back to its foundation in 1925. The foundation owes its formation and its mission to the political legacy of its namesake Friedrich Ebert, the first democratically elected German President. The work of the FES focuses on the core ideas and values of social democracy – freedom, justice and solidarity. This connects us to social democracy and free trade unions. As a non-profit institution, we organize our work autonomously and independently.
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