

Big Brains from Europe Coming

Jacek Pawlicki

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Poland is bringing in some of the best brains available to help prepare its EU presidency, Gazeta has learned. An economics guru, a globalisation expert, an expert on institutions, an American in love with Europe

In the second half of 2011, Poland will for the first time ever hold the rotating EU presidency. To prepare well for the demanding job, Mikołaj Dowgielewicz, head of the European Integration Committee Office (UKIE), has invited a team of foreign advisers.

'These are not only outstanding experts in their respective fields, but they also know what's going on in Europe, what the trends are', the group's coordinator, Paweł Świeboda, head of the demosEuropa Centre for European Strategy think tank, tells Gazeta.

'They will help us prepare the Polish presidency as self-confident and effective in terms of the European ideals and competence', adds Mr Dowgielewicz.

The advisers will all be first-league experts.

Frenchman Laurent Cohen-Tanugi, an expert in international law and European affairs, drew up the famous globalisation report for President Sarkozy.

Another Frenchman, Jean Pisani-Ferry, is the guru of European economists. According to Mr Świeboda, he will 'help us clean after the financial crisis'. When Poland takes over the EU's helm two years from now, Europe will likely have already been past the worst.

Belgium's Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul, secretary general of the Notre Europe think tank, specialises in institutional matters and the EU's 'democratic dimension'; in other words, what is wrong with the EU at a time when treaties are rejected in national referenda. She will advise Poland on how to bring Europe closer to the man in the street.

Briton Alan Mayhew of the Sussex European Institute at Sussex University, has long advised Polish governments on EU matters. A former aide to the legendary Jacques Delors, long-time president of the European Commission, Mr Mayhew has profound experience in European matters, knows, as they say, which way the wind is blowing.

'I think we'll present many good ideas. But it will depend on the Polish government what use it makes of them', Prof Mayhew tells Gazeta.

Italy's Antonio Missiroli, a rising star of European think tanks, director of studies at European Policy Centre, Brussels. He has a significant influence on what the Brussels correspondents of European newspapers write about the EU and its member states.

Dieter Helm, professor at Oxford, expert on European energy policy, which is Poland's specialty in the EU. Former adviser to the Tony Blair administration.

Paul Hofheinz, US citizen, since 1985 based in Europe, former reporter for the Wall Street Journal. Today he is a top expert on innovation and human capital. Founder of the Lisbon Council, which promotes European competitiveness.

All these 'wise men' will meet in Warsaw on 27-28 May. The next meeting will probably take place in the autumn. In early 2010, they will present their first report for the UKIE. The Polish government will pay them only for commissioned reports.

'These are really symbolic sums', says Mr Świeboda.

The UKIE hopes that, having become involved in preparing the Polish presidency, the foreign advisers will become Poland's advocates in the EU.

'What we need is a couple of important mouths repeating the Polish mantra', says Mr Świeboda.

The experts are to suggest the Polish presidency's priorities and review the government's ideas.

Mr Świeboda believes that besides items resulting from the European schedule, such the next budget perspective or the services directive, the short list of the Polish presidency's priorities will include the Eastern Partnership agenda. The head of demosEuropa would also like Poland to surprise the EU with something special; the Polish specialty in the EU, he says, should be innovation and human capital.

The advisers have been chosen with these priorities in mind rather than according to any geographical, political or ideological key. Mr Dowgielewicz wants also to engage Polish think tanks in the preparing of the presidency, such as the Batory (Soros) Foundation, the Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), or the Foundation European Centre Natolin.

'They have great insight into the EU's policy towards the East', says the UKIE head.

Translated by Marcin Wawrzyńczak