

Washington Times, lundi 26 janvier 2009. Article sur les inquiétudes suscitées au sein de l'Union européenne par la présidence tchèque du Conseil de l'UE. Sylvie Goulard y est citée à plusieurs reprises :

New EU presidency sparks concern amid global crises

Smaller government brings inexperience, indifference

Anne-Laure Buffard and Hans Stromsdorfer Monday, January 26, 2009

The Czech Republic's bumpy debut in the European Union presidency has left many Europeans skeptical about the country's ability to cope with the job and has underlined criticism of the very principle of a rotating presidency.

Divisions within the Czech government and the range of crises facing the region and the world at large have intensified concerns about how well the Prague government will handle the post, which it assumed from France on New Year's Day and will hold until the end of June.

Czech President Vaclav Klaus, whose post is largely ceremonial, is a longtime and vocal opponent of European integration. He has described his turn as president of the European Council, the executive body of the European Union, as having « no relevance. »

According to Mr. Klaus, Germany, France, Britain and Italy will continue to control Europe anyway.

« Some comments from Czech President Vaclav Klaus, who refused to adorn Czech public buildings with the European colors, are worrying and even shocking for the citizens of other countries, » said Sylvie Goulard, head of the French European Movement, a leading advocacy group on European issues.

Mrs. Goulard also noted the Czech government's reluctance to ratify the Lisbon Treaty, a document seen by Europhiles as bringing much-needed reform to the 27-member European mammoth.

« However, we shouldn't lump together all the Czechs, » Mrs. Goulard said. « Some of them are very embarrassed by the attitude of their leaders toward Europe. »

For example, the Czech prime minister, Mirek Topolánek, who holds executive power under the Czech system, supports the Lisbon Treaty and European resolutions on climate change. Yet, his weak position at home, where his government lost the majority in the Senate, leaves him with little clout with which to face the Euro-skepticism of his political party, the conservative Civic Democratic Party.

« It's more difficult to preside over the EU without national unity, as is the case today in the Czech Republic, » said Guillaume Klossa, head of the think tank EuropaNova and a special adviser during the French presidency of the European Union. « It will be harder for them to be audacious and carry out best the Europeans' interests. » They are also lacking the big machinery and administrative power that usually helps Europe's bigger countries," he said.