



**ÚŘAD VLÁDY ČESKÉ REPUBLIKY
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Europe without Barriers

***Background on Priorities for the Czech EU Council Presidency
in the First Half of 2009***

The document “Background on Priorities for the Czech EU Council Presidency in the First Half of 2009” was prepared jointly by Ministries in Prague and the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU. It is intended to be a flexible and living document which will be continually updated. It is designed to launch a debate on the themes which will inform the priorities of the Czech EU Presidency. On 28 February 2007 the document received Government approval via the Committee for the EU.

The document addresses the overarching methods of defining and developing the priority issues for the Czech Presidency of the EU. In close cooperation with the EU institutions, Member States and domestic partners this document will form the basis of the Czech approach to its Presidency”. The document emphasises the importance of the Czech Republic working with past and future presidencies. In particular the Czech Republic will cooperate closely with partners from France and Sweden (with whom detailed discussions will begin in the second half of 2007). Another key part of our Presidency preparation will also be to ensure that we liaise on a regular basis with the European institutions and with all Member States.

The main tasks of the Presidency are to ensure continuity in both the smooth running and policy direction of the EU. The programme and priorities are the foundations of any Presidency. The key themes of the Czech Presidency should strike a balance between the national interests of the Czech Republic and the agenda of the EU as a whole. They should also be realistic and attainable.

The Czech Presidency will be guided by current EU policies and concepts. In planning for the Presidency the Czech Republic will also need to consider work in progress, issues passed on from the preceding Presidencies and issues due for decision in the first half of 2009. Therefore the European Parliament elections and the end of the current Commission’s mandate will have to be factored into Czech Presidency planning and objectives.

All priorities will reflect the general theme of the Czech Presidency summarised by the motto “A Europe without Barriers”.

The key range of issues on the Presidency agenda:

- **Competitiveness, the four freedoms and the liberal trade policy**

Further important themes:

- **Safe and sustainable energy**
- **The Budget Review and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy**
- **Transatlantic relations, Western Balkans, Eastern Neighbours**
- **Further development of the area of freedom, security and justice**
- **Institutions and their reform, election of the President of the European Commission and the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy.**

Together with this document, the Government also agreed how to progress debate and develop policy preparation for the Czech Presidency. The individual thematic chapters of the document will be continually developed by sectoral expert groups, which will report at regular intervals. The document will also be submitted for wider discussion to both Chambers of the Czech Parliament, to social partners, representatives of the Association of Regions of the Czech Republic and of the Union of Towns and Municipalities, as well as to the expert community.