

2013

**TRENDS OF CZECH
EUROPEAN POLICY:
STUDY OF EUROPEAN
POLICY ELITES**

Vít Dostál



Asociace
pro mezinárodní
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Association
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MAIN FINDINGS

- The aim of the project was to determine what Czech European policy elites think of the European Union and the Czech Republic's role therein. An on-line questionnaire was sent to 440 potential respondents. Answers were received in 168 cases, of which 124 questionnaires were fully completed and 44 partially completed. The overall response rate was therefore 38.2%, with 28.2% of questionnaires fully completed.
- Elites rate Czech European policy negatively. The Czech Republic is not capable of either formulating or asserting its interests in the EU. However, they expect an improvement in this situation over the next ten years.
- Few doubt the benefits of membership. Respondents highlighted economic and non-economic benefits in equal measure. Membership and the use of European funds strengthen the competitiveness of the Czech economy. The primary positive factor is access to the Single Market, which will intensify further, although a fully liberalized market in services and energy will not be achieved.
- A key issue for the Czech Republic in the coming decade will be developments in the eurozone, which will continue to expand and integrate both economically and institutionally. Two of our closest allies in the EU are members of the eurozone (Slovakia, Germany) and Poland is striving to be as close as possible. The Czech Republic should seek adoption of the common currency and its position outside the eurozone is disadvantageous for the Czech economy.
- The European Union will follow the path of variable geometry. Fundamental institutional reform and a revision of primary law is not expected. The European institutions whose influence will strengthen most will be the European Central Bank and the Court of Justice of the European Union, i.e. institutions that are not primarily political in nature. The Czech Republic should seek a stronger voice for the parliaments of Member States.
- Funds from the European budget should be primarily directed into the development of infrastructure, science, research, innovation and education in the Czech Republic. Conversely, they should not be targeted at supporting tourism or agriculture.
- The most important common European interest in relations with Germany, Poland and the United Kingdom is strengthening the Single Market. With France, respondents saw a common priority in the energy sector.
- Relations with France were rated worst, while most respondents expect a deterioration in relations with Britain. With Poland and France, representatives of European policy elites see conflicting interests in agriculture. With Germany, the Czech Republic cannot find common ground in relation to energy and with the United Kingdom in the question of the future of the EU.
- Respondents believe that the United Kingdom will not withdraw from the EU and that trade with global economic players will continue to be liberalized.
- Although countries in the southern wing of the eurozone will not be forced to give up the euro, they will be unable to restore their competitiveness, which will lead to a further rise in the popularity of anti-European parties in these countries.

FOREWORD

The world in the 21st century is changing faster than ever before. Globalization and the IT technology revolution have sparked new dynamic growth that has increased the push for innovation and creativity all over the world. The key to success in this changing environment is to abandon outdated modes of behavior and open up to our surroundings. Like all the other continents in the world, Europe has not remained in isolation. In the 21st century, Europe must be able to stand up to global competition, which brings new opportunities for its own growth and prosperity on the one hand, but creates more pressure on deeper European cooperation, and the ability to reform and innovate on the other. The greatest challenge for Europe today is to understand the changes in the world order and adjust its political strategies accordingly.

EU Member States have a major advantage in global competition. They belong to a community that constitutes 10% of the world's population and accounts for approximately one quarter of the world's gross domestic product. Through mutual cooperation, EU Member States can thus stand as equal partners alongside superpowers such as the United States of America or China, and thus have a stronger voice in international forums such as G 20.

At the same time, the EU is a community of countries that have pledged to respect basic human rights and universal values such as freedom, democracy and the rule of law. Thanks to this, EU membership is also a guarantee against a return to totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Growth and prosperity go hand in hand with freedom. Only a free and democratic political system can create conditions that promote the development of human creativity and innovation, which are essential for maintaining prosperity in the 21st century.

The recent economic and financial crisis showed us that if we want Europe to be a strong player on the global field that is capable of taking prompt action, it must intensify its integration. This is why, in recent years, there has been further harmonization in the fields of economic, fiscal and financial policies. At the same time, emphasis has been placed on ensuring that the further integration process continues to guarantee the same rights and obligations, as well as decision-making powers for all EU Member States. The return of economic growth after years of recession, as well as the return of foreign investors, has shown that the strategy chosen to resolve the crisis was successful.

Next year, the Czech Republic will celebrate its tenth anniversary of EU membership. During these ten years, the Czech Republic has become a respected partner in European politics, taken part in all meetings and thus bears joint responsibility for European policy-making.

The Czech Republic's active role in the EU is one of the long-term priorities of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in the Czech Republic. This is why, to mark this important anniversary, we were happy to support this academic study to determine current trends of Czech European policy from the perspective of those most qualified to judge - Czech European policy elites. The study you hold in your hands, conducted by the Association for International Affairs, is the first quantitative scientific analysis of the views of Czech European elites. The results of the study provide a holistic view of the perception of European policy through the eyes of Czech elites and shows the challenges facing European politics in the coming years. We hope that this study will contribute to a deeper material discussion of European issues in the Czech Republic.

We wish you inspiring reading.

DR. WERNER BÖHLER

Director of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

INTRODUCTION

Almost ten years after the Czech Republic acceded to the European Union, Czech European policy retains certain peculiarities. The political debate is dominated by the dispute between eurosceptics and euro-optimists or euro-realists and Europhiles. Czech euro-realists operate with a sophisticated system of catchwords and ideas partly based on the ideas of the main symbol of Czech European politics, Václav Klaus, and partly the euroscepticism of the British Conservatives. On the other hand, euro-optimists do not offer a coherent positive position. Parties that support European pro-integration policy are unable to break this ideological argumentation, focusing on a repetition of rough antitheses to eurosceptic arguments, wrapped in the mantra of their affiliation to the European hardcore. In the political debate itself, questions raised by euro-optimists resonate with issues of the incompetence of individuals responsible for the implementation of European policy, poor coordination and dissension in government and between individual constitutional representatives.

The political debate can give the impression that the thinking on Czech European policy has not changed much since the 90s, when the “return to Europe” objective was formulated, as a civilizational and geopolitical choice. While on the one hand, we hear voices questioning the importance or quality of this decision, on the other there is an emphasis on its incompleteness and our continuing place on the periphery. We thus primarily remember those milestones in which these confrontations escalated, such as the obstructions to the signing of the Lisbon Treaty or the rejection of the Fiscal Compact. Ultimately, the winners of this framed public debate are the eurosceptics. Within the EU, the Czech public has long been one of the least trusting in the idea of European unification.

However, the political level of Czech thinking on the EU is not the only important one. Over almost ten years of membership, a group of civil servants, journalists, representatives of private and public organized interests and academics or experts has formed, who are involved in European matters or who have detailed insight into certain sectoral agendas. Their thinking on Czech European policy runs largely parallel to primitively ideological political discussion and without significant interaction therewith. The task of this group of Czech European policy elites is not to create a new “grand strategy”, but to understand the nature of the system in which the Czech Republic operates.

In today’s reality, it is therefore virtually impossible to determine the Czech view on European integration that connects the political debate and the technical, administrative and sectoral level. Petr Nečas’s government presented a conceptual document on European policy, which it undertook to prepare in its policy statement, just a few weeks prior to its fall (and several months after Václav Klaus’s departure from the presidential office). What’s more, the Czech Republic’s EU strategy was ambivalently received in expert circles. There was satisfaction with the fact the document had finally been released, however it was criticized for its vagueness.¹ There was practically no political response from the euro-optimist opposition.

We don’t know what trends are shaping Czech European policy. And it was this lack of information that motivated us to conduct this research on Trends of Czech European Policy. We are convinced that knowledge of the views and convictions of those who influence, or directly implement European policy will not only shed light on how the Czech Republic sees European policy today, but also what Czech policy towards the EU will be in the future.

The realization of this project spanned the period from April to November 2013. From April to June, we compiled a sample of potential respondents, collected contacts and above all, formulated questions. Answers were collected

¹ E.g., EurActiv.cz (2013): Czech EU Strategy Reaps Criticism from Some Political Analysts, article, EurActiv.cz, 7.6.2013, <http://www.euractiv.cz/cr-v-evropske-unii/clanek/strategie-pusobeni-cr-v-eu-sklizi-kritiku-ododborniku-010881>.

in July and August. September was devoted to an analysis of responses and preparation of the study, which was presented in October, together with a web presentation. A supplementary qualitative study was published in November.

The project follows on the research project, Trends of Czech Foreign Policy: Study of Foreign Policy Elites, which the Association for International Affairs conducted in 2011. Foreign inspiration and methodological guidance for both research projects was Trends der Deutschen Aussenpolitik by the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) and the YouGov Survey by British think-tank, Chatham House.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

In addition to the above normative motivation, research results can also contribute to the interpretation of Czech European policy using different theoretical approaches and paradigms of European studies.

The main theoretical inspiration for this research was social constructivism. According to this approach, the shared ideas and views of elites can be seen as constitutive elements of Czech European policy. They also play a key role in the interpretation of external events faced by the Czech Republic in European policy and in finding suitable responses to these events.

In terms of neofunctionalism, elites play a key role in shifting loyalties to supranational institutions, which they see as better tools to achieving their own objectives. Pan-European elites subsequently convince national elites of the advantages of integration and support its spillover into other areas.

For a liberal intergovernmental approach, the preferences of important national players are particularly interesting in terms of forming national negotiating positions. These players, with their views and interests, move about the national arena and participate in the creation of European policy, which is subsequently confronted with other positions within the framework of intergovernmental negotiations.

The preferences of key players are also important for political science approaches to the study of European integration. According to political system theory, specific institutions represented by elites are part of the system and therefore take part in the conversion of political demand and support for concrete decisions and measures. Knowledge of these views and preferences then makes it possible to identify which demand they perceive as relevant and which decisions are important.

In terms of the concept of multilevel governance, a knowledge of the views and preferences of key players allows an assessment of how preferences differ at individual levels (respondents included representatives of European institutions and members of the Committee of the Regions). This research - knowledge of the views of key players and their aggregate interests - is of similar importance for the concept of political networks.

CONTACTED ELITES AND RESPONDENTS

We conceptualized Czech European policy elites as Czech politicians and civil servants deciding on the shape of European policy and important players in the public debate. Specifically, our questions were directed at selected politicians, civil servants, journalists, academics, representatives of the non-governmental non-profit sector, Czech workers at European institutions and workers in the business sector.

Among the politicians that were contacted were deputies on the Foreign Committee and the Committee on European Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies and senators on the Senate's Committee on EU Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Security. The questionnaire was also addressed

to the Presidium of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, the leaders of parliamentary political parties and shadow ministers for European affairs and foreign affairs. Legislative branch at European level was represented by Czech members of the European Parliament. The political executive was represented by members of government, respectively Petr Nečas and Jiří Rusnok's government, due to the appointment of a new cabinet during the course of the study. Last, but not least, Czech representatives on the Committee of the Regions were also categorized as politicians.

The largest group of respondents were civil servants. We first targeted members of the Committee for the EU at working level. At individual ministries, we addressed the questionnaire to deputy ministers, heads of sections, general directors and department directors, who act as coordinators of European affairs. We specifically approached the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Office of the Government. The sample of potential respondents at the MFA included all deputy ministers, general directors and department directors. We used a similar approach for the European Affairs Section of the Office of the Government. We also asked ambassadors and deputy ambassadors in EU Member and Candidate States to complete the questionnaire. Greater attention was devoted to the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU, where we not only selected ambassadors and their deputies, but also the heads of individual sections. Last, but not least, we contacted relevant civil servants in the Office of the President of the Czech Republic and the Department of Protocol and Foreign Relations of the Office of the Government. In this case too, the sample of respondents was amended during the study based on changes in the Ministry made by Jiří Rusnok's government.

The questionnaire was also addressed to Czech workers at European institutions. The selection of potential respondents was primarily based on the list of Most Notable Czechs at EU Institutions prepared by the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU.²

The selection of contacted journalists took place with no unifying objective criteria. Our selection was arbitrary, although we focused on journalists consistently covering European affairs.

The group of contacted academics included holders of the Jean Monnet Chair and contributors to prestigious foreign journals in the field of European studies.

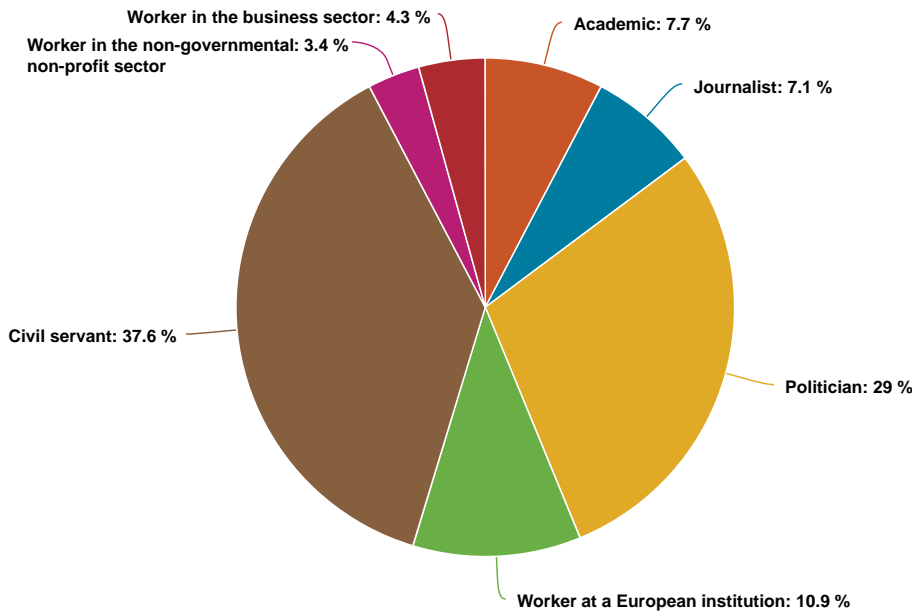
Representatives of the non-governmental non-profit sector included in the research project can be divided into two groups. Firstly, these were representatives of think-tanks involved in expert and public debate on Czech European policy and some members of the government's National Economic Council. The second group consisted of certain Czech representatives on the Economic and Social Committee of the EU and some members of the Council of Economic and Social Agreement.

Members of the two latter-named institutions were also represented in the group of contacted representatives of the business community. This also included certain members of the government's National Economic Council and Czech business representatives in Brussels.

The questionnaire was sent to a total of 440 unique addresses. Answers were received in 168 cases, of which 124 questionnaires were fully completed and 44 partially completed. The overall response rate was therefore 38.2%, with 28.2% of questionnaires fully completed. A significantly weaker response rate was observed among politicians. While we identified 29% of them among respondents, only 12.6% of them indicated their profession as "politician". It is therefore important to take a certain distortion of the research results into account compared to original settings.

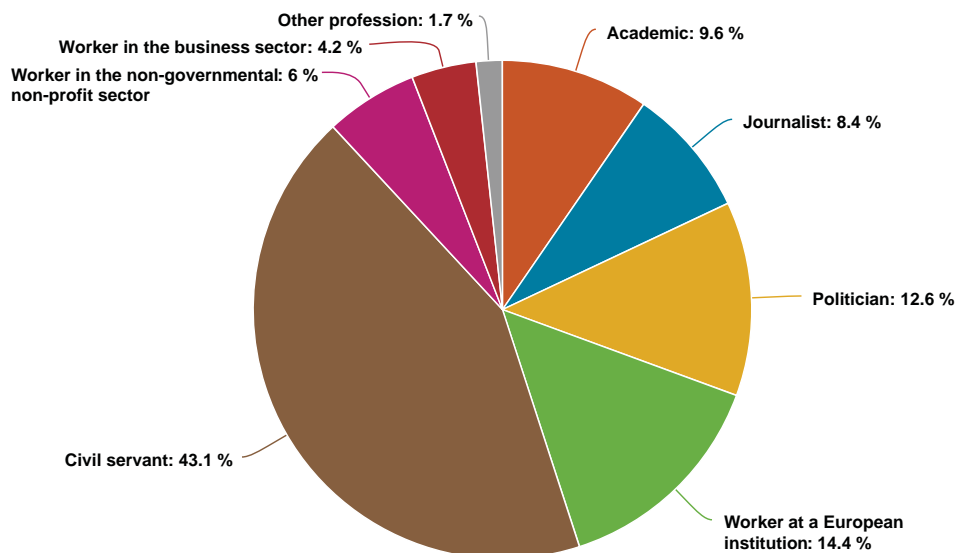
Answers were supplied anonymously. The authors of the research project do not know the identity of individual respondents. The dataset of responses is available for use for further research on the website <http://trendy.amo.cz>.

² Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the European Union: Most Notable Czechs at EU Institutions, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, http://www.mzv.cz/representation_brussels/cz/evropska_unie/cesi_v_ridicich_funkcich_evropskych/index.html.



Which of the following options best corresponds to your profession?

Representation of individual professions among approached persons



Which of the following options best corresponds to your profession?

Representation of individual professions among respondents

TOPICS AND QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was sent using the Internet application SurveyMonkey and included 27 questions. Questions can be thematically divided into five areas: The Czech Republic in the European Union, European institutions, the economic dimensions of integration, partners and allies and current issues.

Typologically, questions were of three types. Respondents most often expressed their level of agreement with presented statements on a scale of “agree”, “somewhat agree”, “somewhat disagree” and “disagree”. Alternatively, in a similar format, they identified importance, benefits or expectations for the future. The option of choosing a neutral answer, as well as answering “I don’t know” were deliberately omitted. The second most frequently used type were open-ended questions. These had to be categorized during evaluation, that is, some answers had to be converted to a higher level of abstraction. For one question, respondents scored their response using school grades.

THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The first group of questions was directed at the perception of the Czech Republic's EU membership, acknowledgment of the benefits of integration, identification of major issues and expectations of the Czech Republic's future influence in the EU. Despite a rather pessimistic view of today's situation, Czech European policy elites expect an improvement in the Czech Republic's ability to assert itself in the future. While they find integration beneficial at both an economic and value level, further development will be dominated by economic issues. According to respondents, the main item on the Czech European policy agenda will clearly be developments in the eurozone, a problem that, given its non-membership, the Czech Republic can only effect secondarily.

³ Zahradil, J. et al. (2011): Manifesto of Czech Euro-Realism: a Document for the ODS Ideological Conference, April 2011, http://www.zahradil.eu/assets/files/publikace/manifest_eurorealismu.pdf, p. 11-13.

⁴ Public Opinion Research Center, Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (2013): Public Opinion on EU Membership - April 2013, Press Release, Prague: Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, <http://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/content2content/documents/c1/a7010/f3/pm130515.pdf>, p. 2.

⁵ European Commission (2013): European Parliament Eurobarometer ONE YEAR TO GO UNTIL THE 2014 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS: Institutional Part, Analytical Overview, Brussels: Directorate-General for Communication Public Opinion Monitoring Unit, 21.8.2013, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2013/election/synth_finale_en.pdf, p. 40.

⁶ Public Opinion Research Center, Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (2013): Citizens and the Adoption of the Euro - April 2013, Press Release, Prague: Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, <http://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/content2content/documents/c1/a7005/f3/pm130503.pdf>.

THE ROLE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

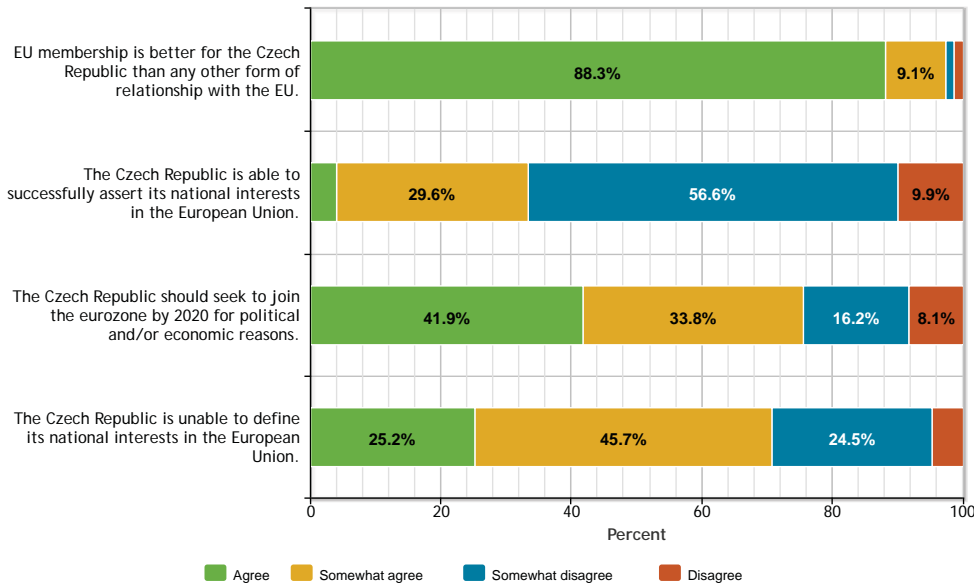
For Czech European policy elites, EU membership is clearly seen as better than any other form of relationship. According to the results, the option of mere membership in the European Economic Area or the conclusion of a separate bilateral agreement according to the Swiss model, which was primarily discussed under Czech conditions in the Manifesto of Czech Euro-Realism,³ and which is currently being considered by British eurosceptics, this is no longer on the agenda. On the other hand, the research can be interpreted to show there is a considerable difference between the thinking of Czech European policy elites and public opinion. According to public opinion polls, citizens dissatisfied with EU membership have predominated over those who are satisfied since 2011.^{4 5}

As with the general view of EU membership, significant differences between public opinion and the opinions of European policy elites can also be found in contemplation of the adoption of the common currency. While according to public opinion polls the view that we should not adopt the euro has prevailed among the citizens of the Czech Republic since 2007,⁶ respondents see the Czech Republic's entry into the eurozone oppositely. Three quarters of them believe that the Czech Republic should seek entry into the eurozone by 2020.

Most respondents believe that the Czech Republic is unable to successfully assert its interests in the European Union. This result indicates that Czech European policy is not well implemented, as it fails to meet its set objectives. This relates to the question of whether the Czech Republic is able to define its own national interests. More than two thirds of respondents are convinced it is not able to do so. The results therefore indicate an unflattering perception of Czech European policy by elites themselves, given that they feel the Czech Republic is unable to determine or assert its interests.

BENEFITS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC'S EU MEMBERSHIP

The next two questions aimed to identify the areas respondents felt were beneficial for the Czech Republic. Respondents were first asked to name three beneficial areas of their own choice. Answers were clearly dominated by the Single Market. Approximately one third of respondents acknowledged the improvement in the competitiveness of the Czech economy and security of the Czech Republic. One fifth of respondents listed the quality of the legal environment, structural and cohesion funds and the Czech Republic's membership in the Schengen Area among their main positives. Topics less



The Role of the Czech Republic in the European Union

To what degree do you identify with the following propositions about the role of the Czech Republic in the European Union?

frequently highlighted included foreign policy, the quality of democracy, political integration as such, the adoption of values, regional policy and the environment. It is interesting to note that responses highlighting the economic importance of integration occurred with approximately the same frequency as those highlighting non-economic benefits.

area	frequency
Single Market	59.9%
security	32.1%
economic competitiveness	29.9%
quality of the legal environment	21.2%
structural and cohesion funds	19.7%
Schengen	18.2%
foreign policy	13.1%
quality of democracy	13.1%
political integration	8.8%
adoption of values	8.8%
regional policy	5.1%
the environment	5.1%

Benefits of the Czech Republic's EU Membership I

In what three areas do you think EU membership has been the greatest benefit for the Czech Republic?

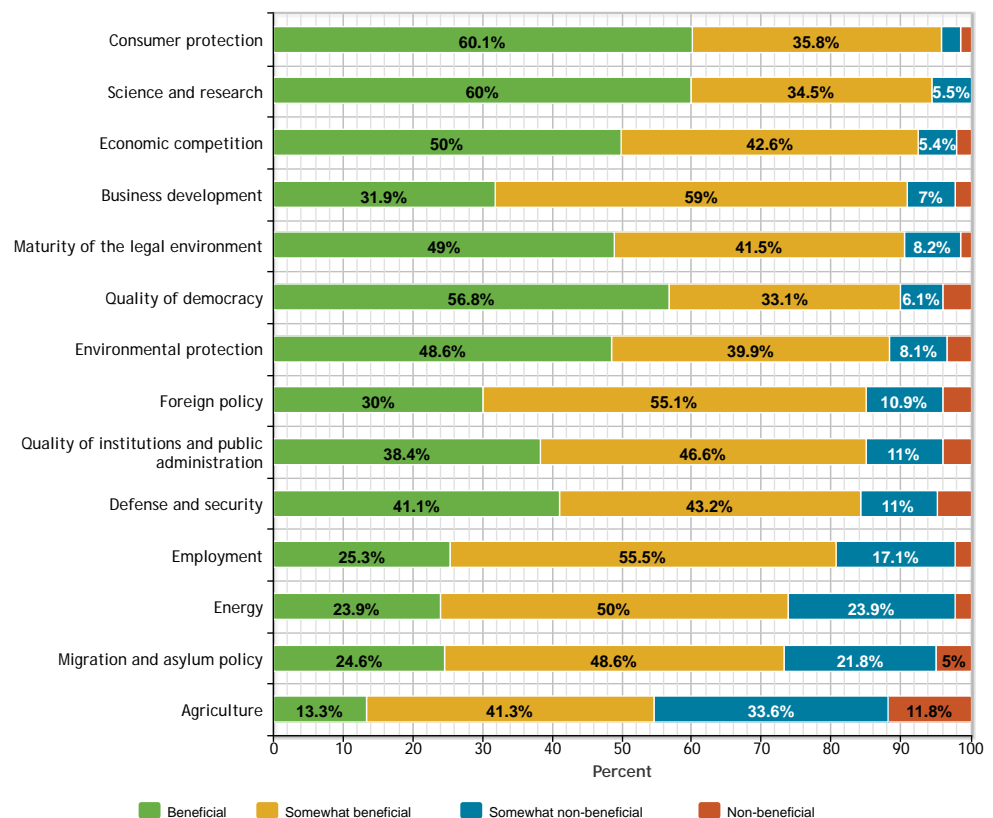


We then asked respondents to evaluate the benefits of EU membership in predetermined areas. Here too, certain topics associated with the Single Market were most popular - consumer protection, economic competition and

business development. Surprisingly, the benefits of EU membership were also acknowledged in science and research, which was only marginally represented in spontaneous responses. The impact of membership on the quality of democracy, maturity of the legal environment and environmental protection were also perceived very positively. In contrast, respondents clearly saw the weakest benefits of membership in agriculture, followed a long way back by the energy sector and asylum and migration policy. Overall however, the Czech Republic's EU membership was perceived as more beneficial than not in all monitored areas. This result can be interpreted as a confirmation of the first result above, regarding the clear support of the Czech Republic's membership in the EU.

Benefits of the Czech Republic's EU Membership II

Is the Czech Republic's membership in the EU beneficial in these areas?



IMPORTANCE OF EUROPEAN ISSUES FOR THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN THE COMING DECADE

The format of the following two questions was identical. Respondents were first asked to spontaneously name three of the most important issues for Czech European policy in the coming decade. This was followed by an evaluation of the importance of predetermined issues.

In the open-ended question, respondents identified the most important issue in the coming decade as developments in the eurozone, which was mentioned in half the responses. Energy was represented in one third of responses. According to European policy elites, other important issues for the Czech Republic will be economic development in the EU, migration, the development of the Single Market, agriculture and multi-speed integration. It is interesting to note that, according to the open-ended question, the five most important areas include two - energy and migration - which were identified as less beneficial.

developments in the eurozone



area	frequency
developments in the eurozone	49,2%
energy	34,6%
economic development in the EU	21,5%
migration	15,4%
expansion of the Single Market	11,5%
agriculture	11,5%
multi-speed integration	10,0%
banking union	9,2%
intensifying integration	9,2%
structural funds	8,5%
adoption of the euro in the Czech Republic	7,7%
institutional reform	6,9%
employment	6,2%
climate and energy policy	5,4%

Importance of European Issues for the Czech Republic in the Coming Decade I

Name three European issues that will have the greatest impact on the Czech Republic in the coming decade.

Developments in the eurozone maintained first place as the most important issue in the coming decade, even in the context of closed questions. What's more, this is followed by two issues whose appearance on the European agenda relates to the turbulent developments in the eurozone. This is the coordination of economic and fiscal policy and the establishment of a so-called banking union. Other very important issues according to respondents will also be strengthening the Single Market, cohesion policy, the use of funds from the European budget and energy policy. The surprise is that, this is only then, followed by non-economic issues such as deepening of integration and institutional reforms, which are spoken of in relation to future development at European level.

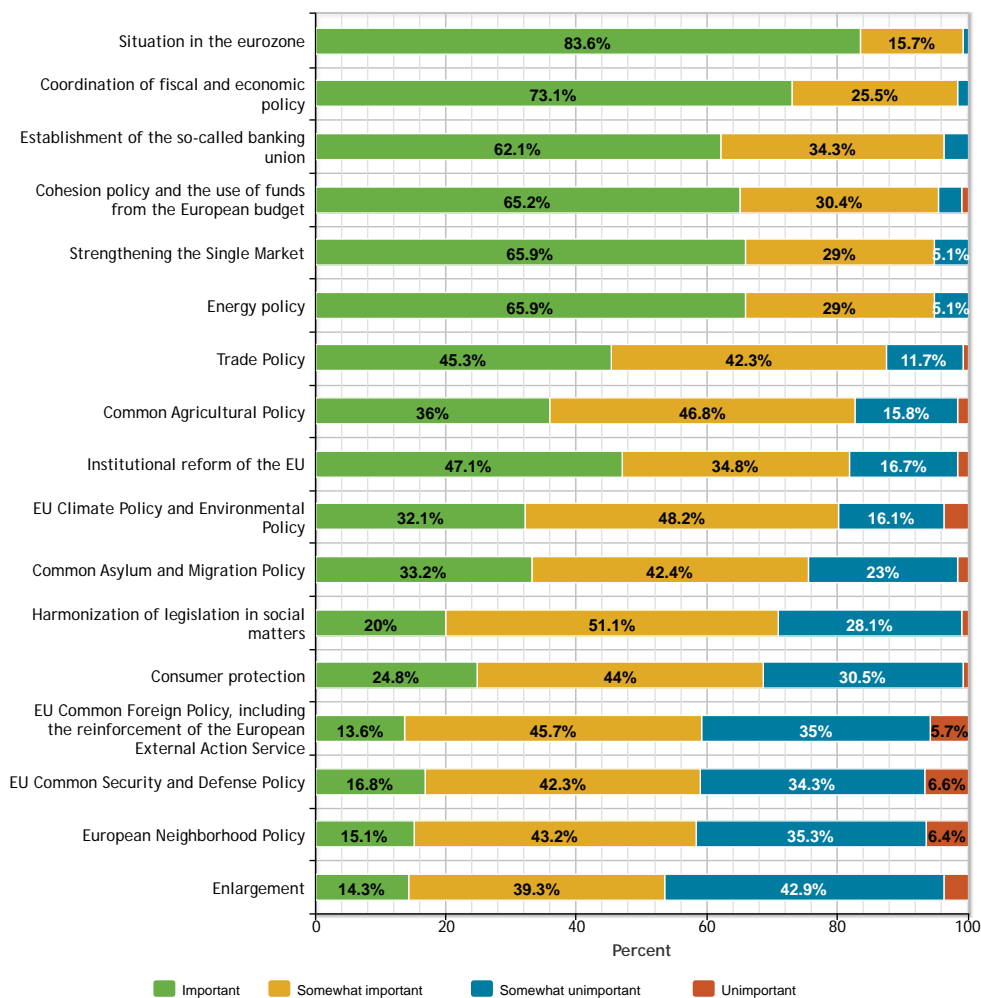
In contrast, less important issues are those relating to the role of the EU in an international context: enlargement, European Neighborhood Policy, EU Common Foreign Policy, including reinforcement of the European External Action Service and the Common Security and Defense Policy.

THE CZECH REPUBLIC'S ABILITY TO ASSERT ITSELF IN THE EU

Despite a relatively negative view of the Czech Republic's ability to formulate and assert its priorities in European policy, most respondents believe that this situation will change in the future. Two thirds of respondents stated that the Czech Republic will increase or somewhat increase its ability to influence events in the EU.

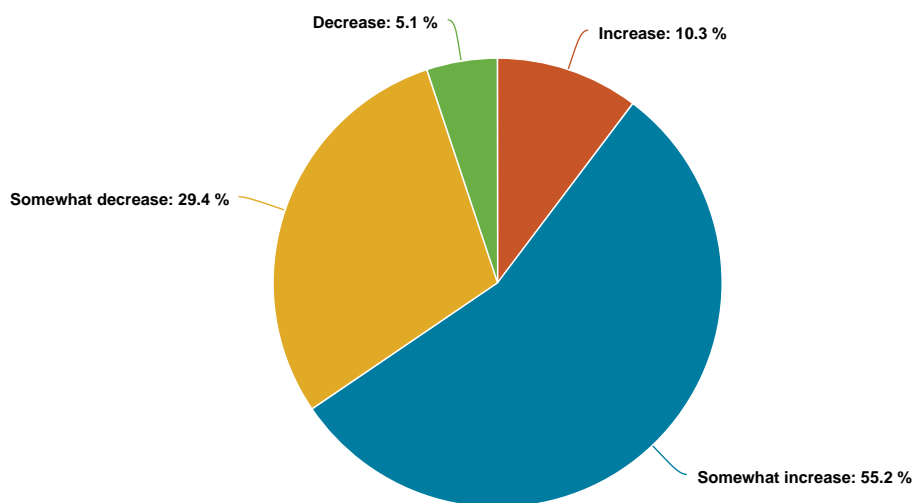
Importance of European Issues for the Czech Republic in the Coming Decade II

What importance will the following European issues have for the Czech Republic in the coming decade?



The Czech Republic's Ability to Assert Itself in the EU

How will the Czech Republic's ability to influence events in the EU change over the next decade?

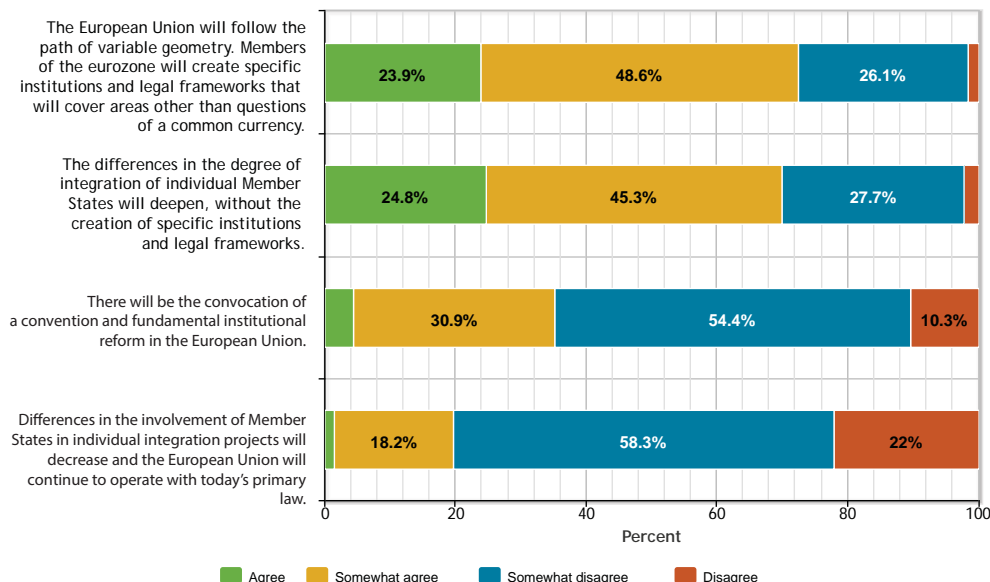


EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

The second group of questions focused on expected developments and Czech priorities in the context of institutional issues. The results show that respondents feel that European institutions and the EU legal framework will change in an undesirable manner for the Czech Republic. The eurozone will integrate more closely, however a major revision of primary law is not expected. Non-political institutions will strengthen - the European Central Bank and the Court of Justice of the European Union. It is in the interests of the Czech Republic to maintain current institutional architecture with a strengthening of national parliaments.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EU INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OVER THE NEXT DECADE

According to respondents, the European Union will (continue to) go the way of variable geometry. Differences in the involvement of individual Member States in various integration projects will not decrease. There is evident ambivalence on the question of a change of primary law. On the one hand, respondents do not expect the creation of specific institutions and legal frameworks, however they do not believe the next ten years will end without a change in primary law. These changes, however, will be conducted outside standard procedure, which is the convocation of a convention, as respondents do not expect this step or more fundamental institutional reform. Nevertheless, they do expect more intense integration within the eurozone, and this including in other areas than questions of a common currency.



Developments in the EU Institutional Framework Over the Next Decade

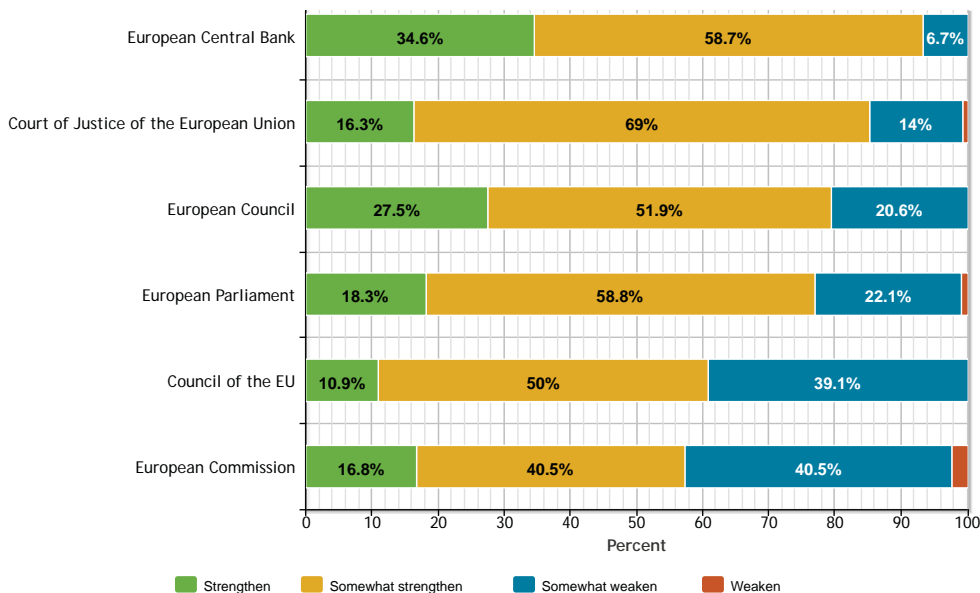
Do you agree with these propositions on the development of the EU in the following decade?

THE ROLE OF EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS IN THE COMING DECADE

The next question was aimed at the expected shift in the importance of individual European institutions in the coming decade. The institution that is expected to strengthen most is clearly the European Central Bank. 85% of respondents expect an increase in the influence of the Court of Justice of the European Union. According to the responses received, two institutions, which are not primarily political but judicial or regulatory in nature, are expected to become more influential. Over three quarters of European policy elites believe in the strengthening influence of the European Council and European Parliament. In contrast, respondents believe that the Council of the EU and European Commission, which proposes legislative acts and is seen as the guardian of treaties, will gain the least influence. It is interesting to note that none of the selected institutions is expected to decline in importance. This finding can also be interpreted to mean that there is an expectation of more decision-making at European level and that institutions will strengthen in relation to the national level.

The Role of European Institutions in the Coming Decade

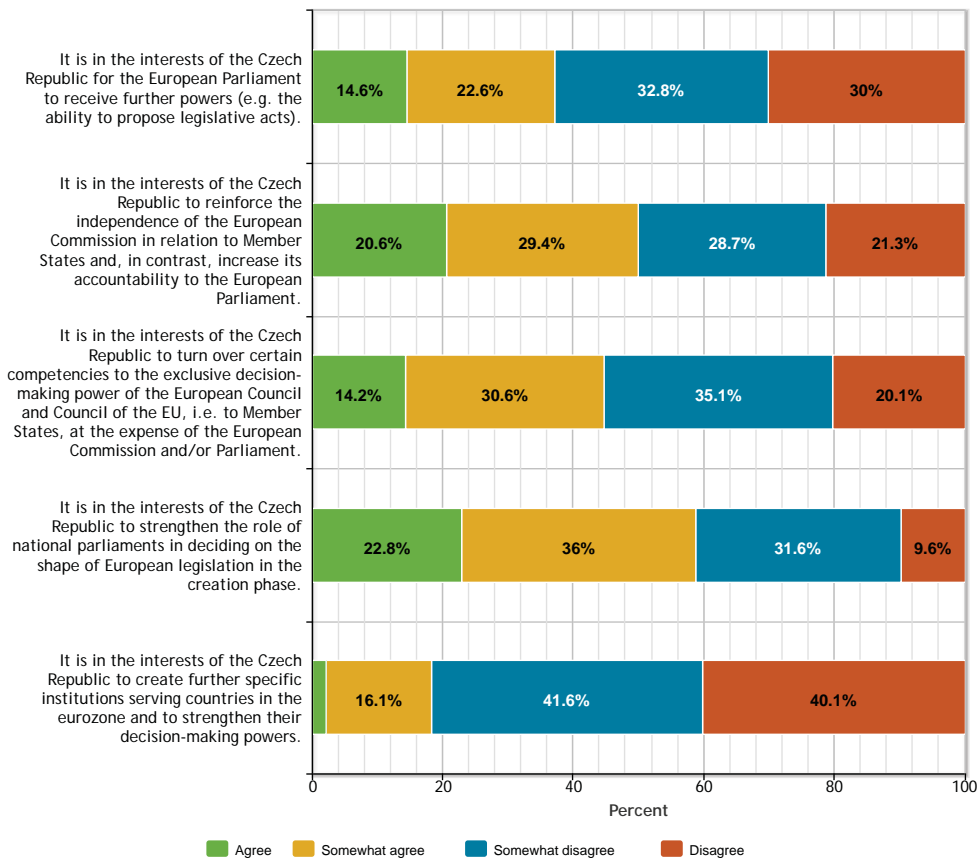
How will the importance of these European institutions change in the coming decade?



THE ROLE OF EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS AND THE INTERESTS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Despite the expected strengthening of supranational and intergovernmental European institutions, almost 59% of respondents think that it is in the interests of the Czech Republic for national parliaments to have a greater say in decisions on the shape of European legislation. Further findings on preferred changes in European institutions are in contradiction to expected developments. While, in contrast to other European institutions, the European Commission is not expected to strengthen in influence, half of Czech European policy elites believe that the Commission should be more independent of Member States and more accountable to the European Parliament. This, as a supranational institution, is generally considered as an ally of the Commission within the framework of European integration. Those propositions that claim it is in the interests of the Czech Republic for certain competencies to be turned over to the exclusive jurisdiction of intergovernmental institutions did not receive significant support, nor did the idea of granting the European Parliament further powers. The possibility of new institutions created by countries in the eurozone is clearly perceived negatively. The benefits of such a move are only

seen by less than one fifth of respondents. Here too, there is a contradiction between developments beneficial for the Czech Republic and the expected situation, as over two thirds of respondents believe that the EU is heading along this specific course. It can be said that in the opinion of European policy elites, neither a return to “before Lisbon” or significant new reform is appropriate for the Czech Republic in institutional issues.



The Role of European Institutions and the Interests of the Czech Republic

Do you agree with the following propositions regarding the role of European institutions and the interests of the Czech Republic?

ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

According to Czech European policy elites, the Czech Republic's membership in the EU has had a clearly positive impact on the economy, which would also benefit from a common currency. The priority for the Czech Republic should be liberalization of the market in services, which however respondents do not expect to happen, although the Single Market will continue to be liberalized. Respondents do not believe that the Czech Republic will reduce its export dependency on the EU. No country will leave the eurozone, which will more closely coordinate its economic policy. The EU budget should be increased and the Czech Republic should primarily direct funds from the EU into the development of infrastructure, science, research, innovation and education.

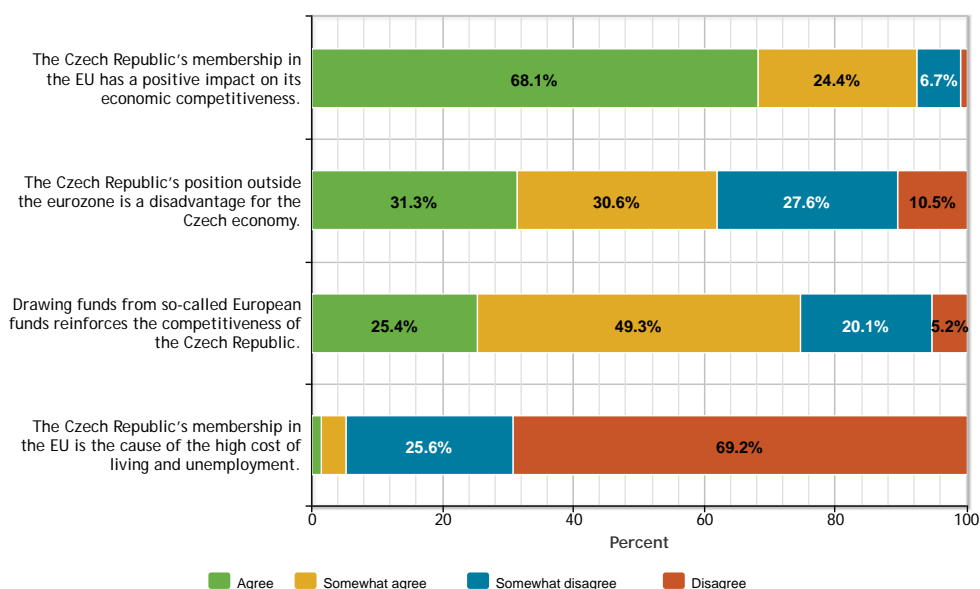
IMPACT OF EU MEMBERSHIP ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic's membership in the EU has had a clearly positive impact on the Czech economy and is not the cause of negative phenomena such as the high cost of living and unemployment. Over nine-tenths of respondents agree on the benefits of membership for the economy. Only 7%, respectively 5% of respondents have a different opinion. Despite problems with drawing subsidies, corruption scandals and media denouncement of numerous projects realized with EU contributions,⁷ the prevailing opinion is that the use of European funds benefits the Czech economy. Almost two thirds of respondents believe that the adoption of a common currency would benefit the Czech economy. This result correlates with the findings in the initial part of the study, according to which the Czech Republic should seek to join the eurozone by 2020.

⁷ I.e. Zlámálová, L. (2012): Subsidies for Coca-Cola, *lidovky.cz*: 19.3.2012, http://www.lidovky.cz/zlamalova-dotace-na-coca-colu-dil-nazory.aspx?c=Ai203i9_i20058_in_nazory_rka.

Impact of EU Membership on Economic Development in the Czech Republic

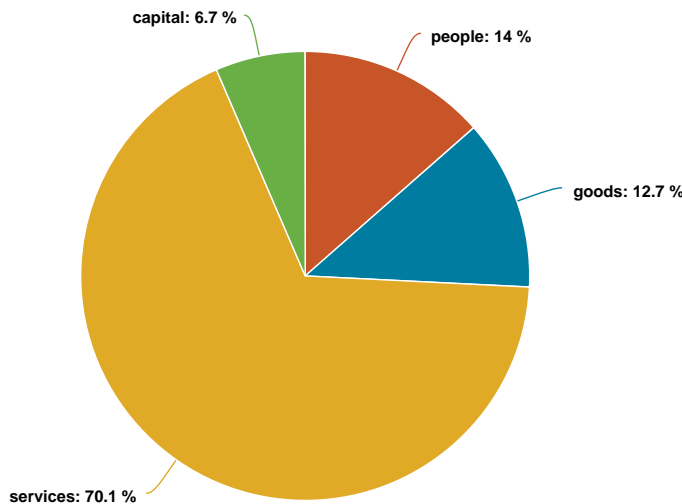
Do you agree with the following propositions regarding the impact of EU membership on economic development in the Czech Republic?



FOUR FREEDOMS

The following questions were aimed at issues concerning the Single Market and regulation. According to more than two thirds of respondents, the

liberalization of services is more important progress for the Czech Republic than the liberalization of the market in any other sector. According to one tenth of European policy elites, improving the free movement of goods and people is a priority for the Czech Republic. Only 7% of respondents prefer liberalization of the free movement of capital.

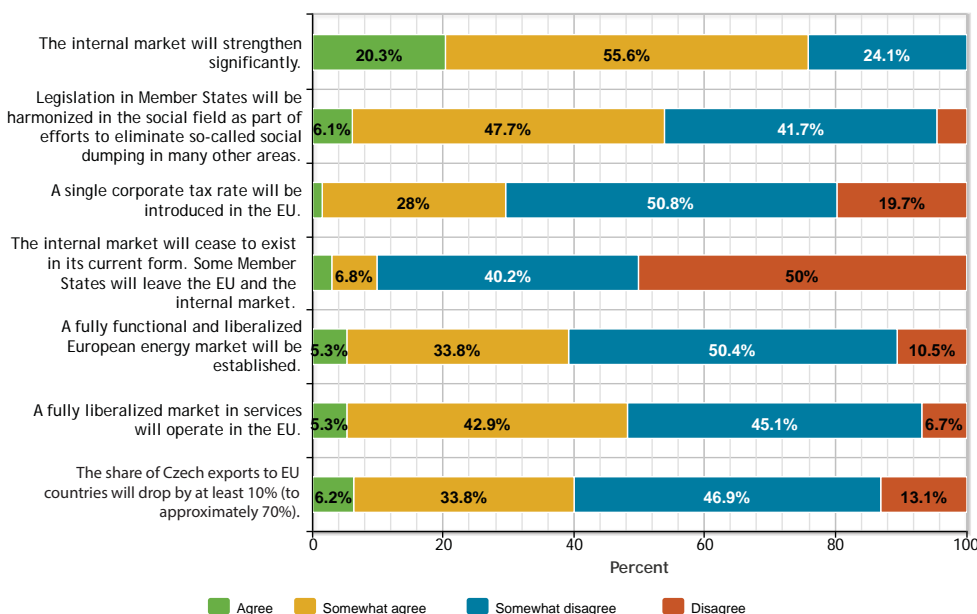


Four freedoms

In which area of the Single Market is an advance in further liberalization most important for the Czech Republic? In the free movement of...

INTERNAL MARKET AND REGULATION

Although three quarters of respondents believe in a significant strengthening of the Single Market in the coming decade, less than half believe in the creation of a fully liberalized market in services. In this respect, there is a lack of confidence in the realization of Czech interests. Nor, in the opinion of European policy elites, will a fully liberalized market be created in energy, which was identified as one of the most important issues in Czech European policy over the next decade. The majority of respondents expect a convergence of regulations in the social sector. In contrast, only one third of respondents expect harmonization of corporate taxation and almost no one is entirely convinced of this step. We received interesting results in the question aimed at the expected share of Czech exports to the EU. Only two fifths of respondents



Internal Market and Regulation

Do you agree that the following assumptions will occur in the next decade?

⁸ E15.cz (2011): New Export Strategy to Reduce Dependence on Exports to the EU, article, E15.cz, 31.10.2011, <http://zpravy.e15.cz/domaci/udalosti/nova-vyvozni-strategie-snizi-zavislost-exportu-na-eu-712980>.

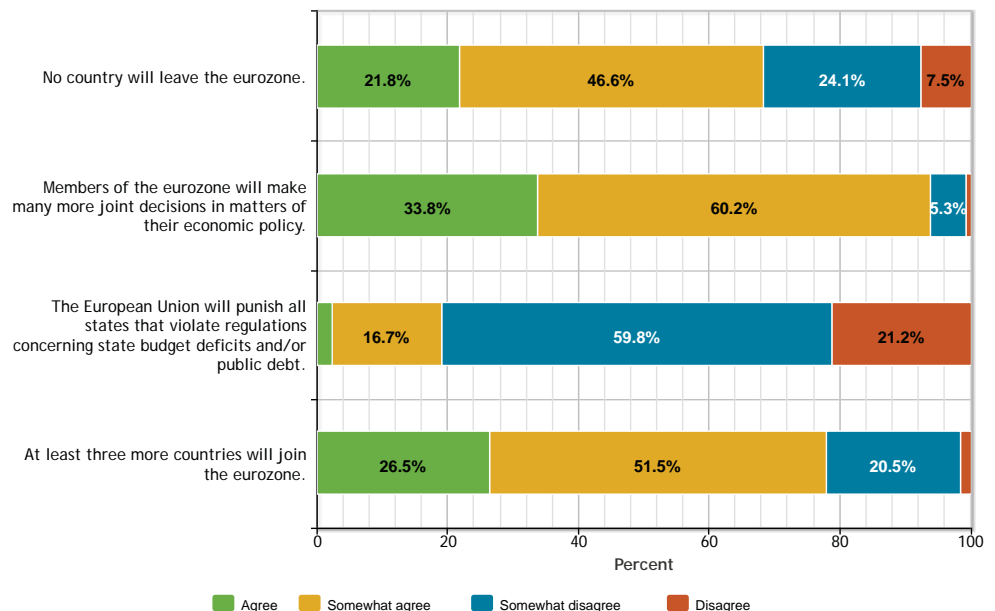
believe that the Czech Republic's dependence on exports to the EU will drop to 70%, that it, the target of the Export Strategy of the Czech Republic.⁸ In contrast, positive news is that only a handful of respondents believe in the breakdown of the Single Market (less than 10%).

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EUROZONE

Czech European policy elites forecast the eurozone to be in relatively good condition: over the next ten years it will expand by at least three countries, none of its members will leave and members of the eurozone will make more joint decisions in matters of economic policy. On the other hand, only one fifth of respondents believe that all countries that violate common rules regarding state budget deficits and public debt will be punished. This finding demonstrates the lack of confidence in the function of old and new instruments (Six-Pack, Fiscal Compact), by which countries violating agreed regulations are to be penalized.

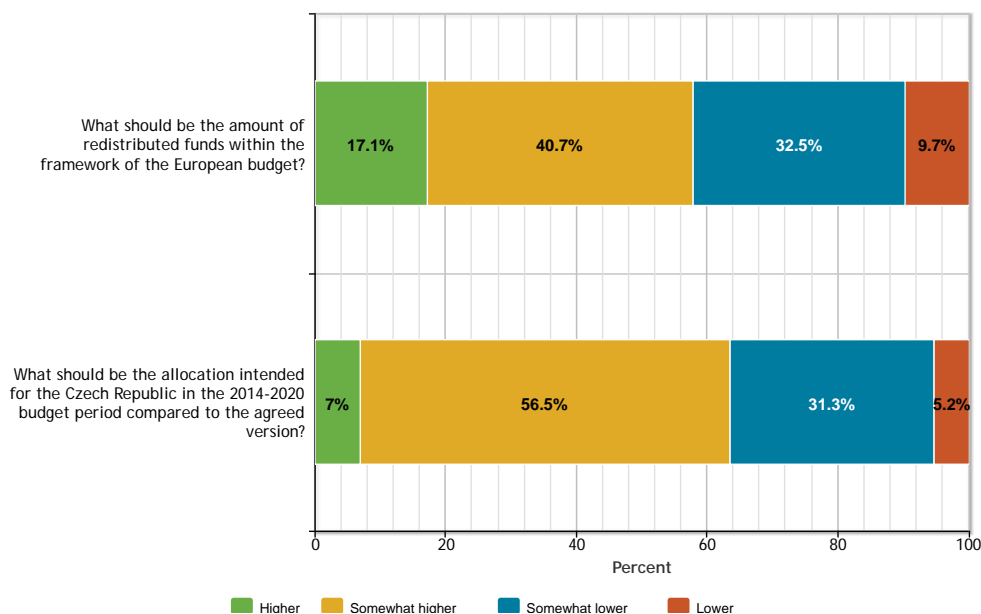
Developments in the Eurozone

Do you agree that the following assumptions will occur in the next decade?



SCOPE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION BUDGET

The majority of Czech European policy elites believe that the overall European Union budget should be increased. The majority view thus differs from the position held by the Czech Republic in the negotiation of the EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2014-2020, and the overall trend. The total amount of funds to be redistributed will, in fact, be decreased in the coming programming period. Respondents also feel that allocations intended for the Czech Republic for this period should also be higher.



TARGET OF FUNDS FROM THE EU BUDGET IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

An open-ended and closed question on the target of funds from the EU budget followed. In the case of the open-ended question, respondents had the opportunity to name three areas into which they would direct EU funds. Clear priorities were infrastructure, which was indicated by almost three quarters of respondents, and science, research and innovation, into which two thirds of respondents would direct European funds. One third of respondents would support education, while one fifth of respondents see the environment as a priority area for allocations. More than one tenth of European policy elites see a priority in supporting employment and developing backward regions.



area	frequency
infrastructure	73,8%
science, research and innovation	68,3%
education	35,7%
the environment	19,0%
development of backward regions	15,9%
employment	10,3%
agriculture	8,7%
energy	7,1%
business support	6,3%
social policy	6,3%

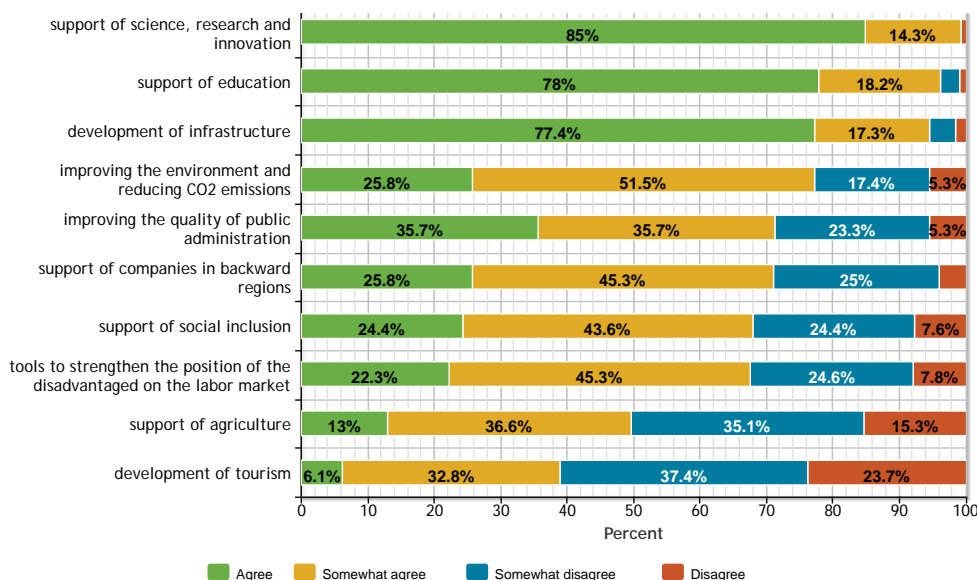
Targets of European Union Budget Funds in the Czech Republic I

Into which three areas do you feel funds from the European budget intended for the Czech Republic should be directed?

Support for science, research and innovation, the development of infrastructure and education also took the first three places in closed questions, although their order was different and differences in support were minimal in contrast to spontaneous responses. Support for other areas fluctuated between 67-77% with two exceptions, which received less than 50% of votes. This was agriculture and the development of tourism, which less than two fifths of respondents felt should be supported with European funds.

Targets of European Union Budget Funds in the Czech Republic II

Do you agree that funds from the European budget intended for the Czech Republic should be directed into the following areas?



PARTNERS AND ALLIES

The next area of the study focused on relations between the Czech Republic and other EU Member States. Our greatest ally in the EU according to Czech European policy elites is Slovakia, followed by Germany and Poland. The quality of relations with these countries also has the highest rating. Respondents expect a deterioration in the Czech Republic's relations with the United Kingdom. Common interests in relations with Germany, Poland and the United Kingdom can be found in the agenda of the Single Market. In relations with France, practically the only shared priority is energy, which, in turn, is a highlighted conflicting interest in the case of Germany.

ALLIES OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Czech Republic's EU strategy does not name key allies. The Foreign Policy Concept of the Czech Republic of 2011⁹ talks of close partners. The Czech Republic's relations with Germany and Poland are deemed as strategic. In relations with Slovakia, the common history and close proximity of both nations is highlighted, while relations with Austria are labeled as "traditional".

In this open-ended question, respondents were asked to indicate the Czech Republic's greatest allies in the EU. Slovakia appeared in first place, and was mentioned by almost 72% of respondents. This was followed by Germany and Poland. It is interesting to note that the importance of cooperation in European policy with Germany and Poland is also highlighted in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Czech Republic, while the passage on Slovakia does not mention cooperation in EU matters. Much further back in fourth place is the United Kingdom, which was mentioned by one fifth of respondents. More than one tenth of respondents mentioned Austria, and somewhat surprisingly also Sweden.

⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic (2011): Foreign Policy Concept of the Czech Republic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, http://www.mzv.cz/file/675937/koncepce_zahranicni_politiky_2011_cz.pdf.



Allies of the Czech Republic in the European Union

Which three countries do you consider as the Czech Republic's greatest allies in the European Union?

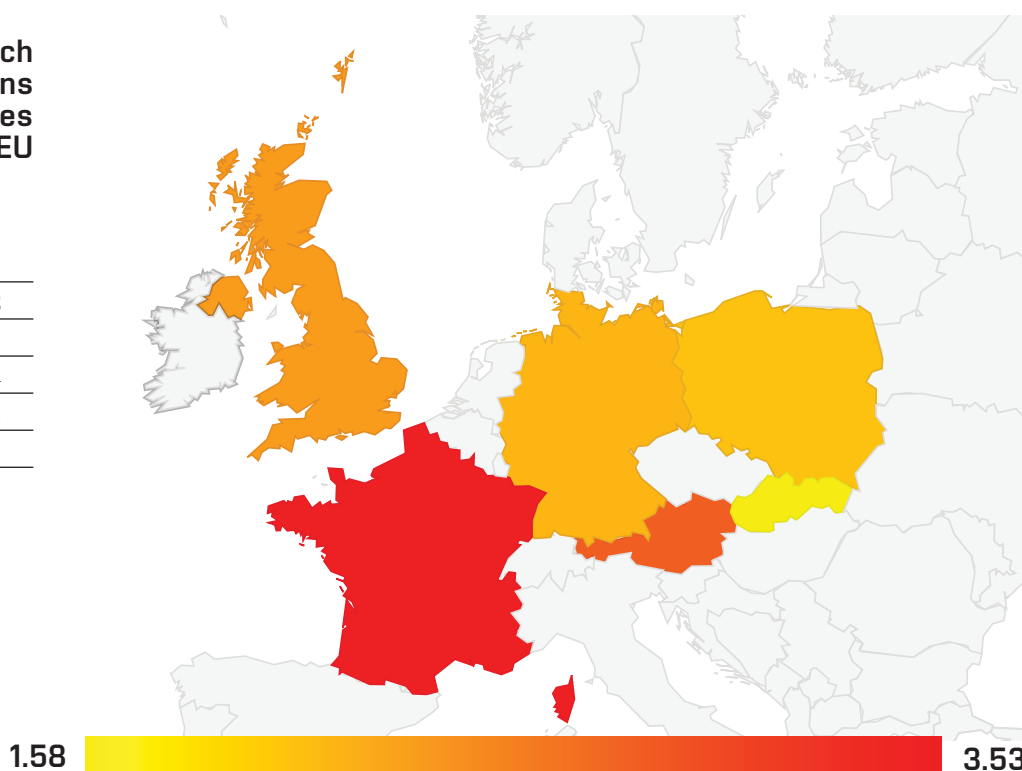
country	frequency
Slovakia	71,9%
Germany	66,1%
Poland	61,2%
United Kingdom	21,5%
Sweden	15,7%

Austria	12,4%
Netherlands	8,3%
Hungary	7,4%

THE CZECH REPUBLIC'S RELATIONS WITH SELECTED COUNTRIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Quality of the Czech Republic's Relations with Selected Countries in the EU

country	Ø
Slovakia	1,58
Poland	2,05
Germany	2,14
United Kingdom	2,34
Austria	2,83
France	3,53

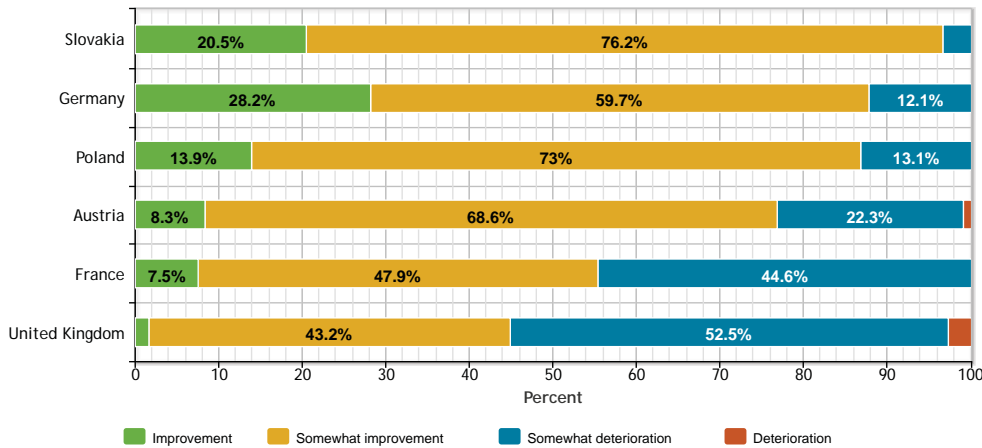


In the next question, respondents were invited to rate the quality of relations with selected countries in the EU using Czech school grades of 1-5 (1 means the best, 5 the worst). We chose the three largest EU countries in terms of GDP and population (Germany, France and the United Kingdom) and our remaining neighbors (Poland, Austria and Slovakia) for evaluation. We decided to limit the choice of countries to ensure that qualitatively assessable relations truly exist with these countries, on which our group of respondents has developed an opinion.

Grades correspond to the results from the previous question. Relations with Slovakia are rated the highest. Poland and Germany received a “two”. Relations with France fared the worst, which only received a “three minus” from respondents.

FUTURE OF RELATIONS WITH SELECTED COUNTRIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

For the same countries for which they rated the quality of relations, respondents also indicated expected developments in the next decade. Respondents only expect a deterioration in relations with the United Kingdom, which was previously rated “two minus”. In contrast, a further improvement in relations with selected countries is expected with Slovakia, Poland and Germany. Respondents also expect an optimistic future in relations with Austria. The slight majority of respondents also expect an improvement in poor relations with France.



Future of the Czech Republic's Relations with Selected Countries in the European Union

What developments do you expect in relations with these countries over the next ten years within the framework of European policy?

COMMON INTERESTS

The next part of the questionnaire asked respondents to identify a maximum of three interests that France, Germany and the United Kingdom share with the Czech Republic.

In the case of France, we could get the impression that our only common interest is in the energy sector, which was indicated by more than half of respondents. This result is probably due to the fact that France and the Czech Republic are among the loudest proponents of nuclear energy in the EU. Other shared priorities such as agriculture or the Common Security and Defense Policy were only mentioned in less than 10% of cases.



FRANCE

common interest	frequency
energy	48,4%
Common Security and Defense Policy	8,8%
agriculture	8,8%
Common Foreign and Security Policy	6,6%

COMMON INTERESTS — FRANCE

What main common interests do you see with these countries within the EU? (List a maximum of three)

With Germany, the spread of the greatest common interests was more balanced. According to respondents, the main shared priority is the Single Market, followed by economic policy, energy and industry. This perception confirms Germany's position as the Czech Republic's most important economic partner.

GERMANY



COMMON INTERESTS — GERMANY

What main common interests do you see with these countries within the EU? (List a maximum of three)

common interest	frequency
Single Market	37.4%
economic policy	29.7%
energy	12.1%
industry	9.9%
science and research	8.8%
fiscal policy	8.8%
infrastructure	7.7%
trade policy	5.5%
future of the eurozone	5.5%
political cooperation	5.5%

The Single Market is also the most important common interest in the case of Poland. It was mentioned in one quarter of responses. This was followed by energy, cohesion policy, infrastructure and economic policy. Nearly 10% of respondents indicated Eastern Partnership as a shared priority, which makes it the most highlighted foreign policy issue in the question.

POLAND



COMMON INTERESTS — POLAND

What main common interests do you see with these countries within the EU? (List a maximum of three)

common interest	frequency
Single Market	24.2%
energy	19.8%
cohesion policy	16.5%
infrastructure	14.3%

economic policy	11,0%
Eastern Partnership	9,9%
agriculture	8,8%
Common Foreign and Security Policy	7,7%
Common Security and Defense Policy	5,5%
political cooperation	5,5%
climate and energy policy	5,5%

The Single Market is also the most frequently mentioned common issue in the case of the United Kingdom. It was mentioned by two fifths of respondents. A lot further back, this was followed by economic policy, the future of the EU and institutional issues with a response frequency of around 10%. It is interesting to note that issues associated with the further development of European integration were only emphasized in the case of relations with Great Britain.



UNITED KINGDOM

common interest	frequency
Single Market	41,8%
economic policy	11,0%
institutional issues	9,9%
future of the EU	9,9%

COMMON INTERESTS — UNITED KINGDOM

What main common interests do you see with these countries within the EU? (List a maximum of three)

CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The last question aimed at partners and allies looked for conflicting interests in relations with France, Germany, Poland and the United Kingdom. For the first three mentioned countries, respondents clearly identified divergent priorities. For France this concerned agriculture, which is a highlighted area in its European policy, while the benefits of membership in this area are not, in the opinion of respondents, very highly appreciated. According to respondents, interests are also divergent in the area of the Single Market and social policy.



FRANCE

CONFLICTING INTERESTS — FRANCE

What main conflicting interests do you see with these countries within the EU? (List a maximum of three)

conflicting interest	frequency
agriculture	54,9%
Single Market	18,7%
social policy	15,4%
tax policy	8,8%
institutional issues	7,7%

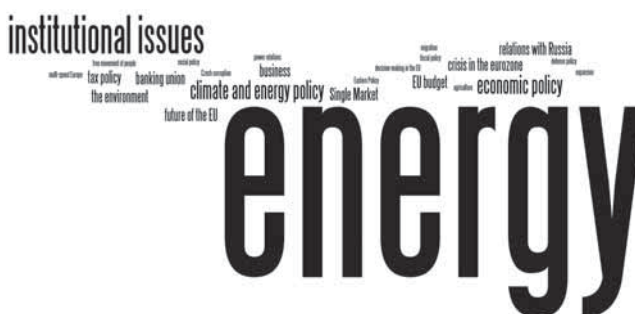
With Germany, the highlighted conflicting interest is energy. This result can be placed in the context of Germany's "Energiewende", which raised considerable doubts in the Czech Republic. The frequency of responses in other areas was only marginal.

GERMANY

CONFLICTING INTERESTS — GERMANY

What main conflicting interests do you see with these countries within the EU? (List a maximum of three)

conflicting interest	frequency
energy	39,6%
institutional issues	6,6%



The situation is similar with Poland, where - the same as with France - most conflicting interests were identified in the area of agriculture. Here too, other issues were only mentioned marginally.

POLAND

CONFLICTING INTERESTS — POLAND

What main conflicting interests do you see with these countries within the EU? (List a maximum of three)

conflicting interest	frequency
agriculture	45,1%
future of the EU	5,5%
institutional issues	5,5%
regional rivalry	5,5%



It is interesting to note that issues that were emphasized as a conjunction of common interests in the case of the United Kingdom (the future of the EU and institutional issues), were also most frequently mentioned in the case of conflicting interests. Czech European policy elites are therefore divided in their position on Great Britain. And the future of the United Kingdom's European policy is the subject of the first series of current issues.



UNITED KINGDOM

conflicting interest	frequency
deepening of integration	12.1%
future of the EU	9.9%
crisis in the eurozone	7.7%
Brexit	7.7%
institutional issues	5.5%
EU budget	5.5%

CONFLICTING INTERESTS — UNITED KINGDOM

What main conflicting interests do you see with these countries within the EU? (List a maximum of three)

CURRENT ISSUES

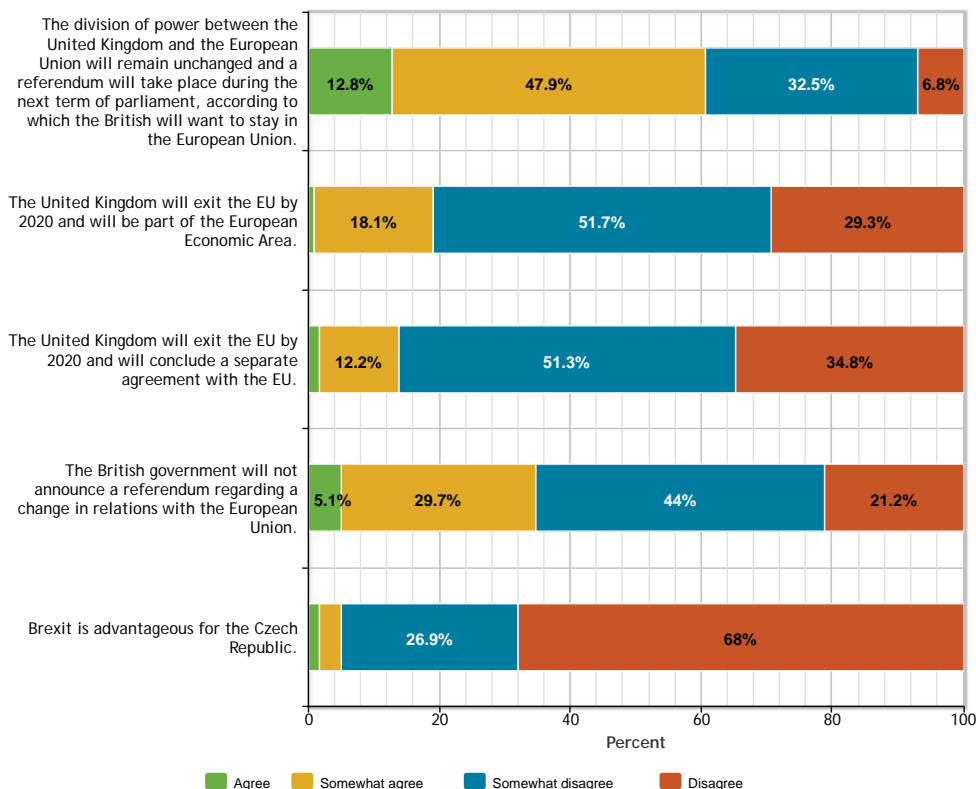
The final part of the questionnaire focuses on current issues on the European agenda. For the study, we selected the issues of Brexit, trade policy, financial transaction tax and the situation in the southern wing of the eurozone. The results showed that in the opinion of Czech European policy elites Britain will not withdraw from the EU, trade policy will continue to be liberalized, financial transaction tax will be introduced in parts of the EU and the situation in the southern wing of the EU will remain more or less unchanged.

BREXIT

The topic of Brexit began to echo strongly in European and Czech debate following David Cameron's speech on Britain's future in the EU, which he gave in January 2013, and in which he promised a referendum in the next term of parliament. Respondents believe that the referendum will take place, but at the same time, they are convinced that despite no change in the division of power, the United Kingdom will remain in the EU. Two fifths of respondents can envisage another form of relationship between Britain and the EU. The opinion among European policy elites is dominated by the conviction that Brexit would be disadvantageous for the Czech Republic.

Brexit

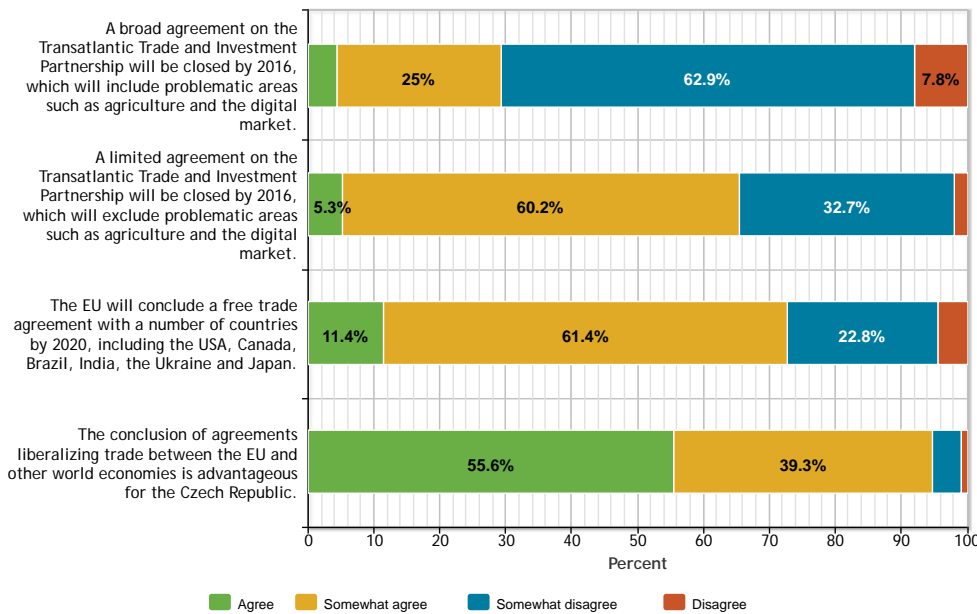
Do you agree with these propositions regarding developments in relations between the United Kingdom and the EU?



DEVELOPMENT OF EU TRADE POLICY

The next question focused on the liberalization of trade between the EU and other countries. The greatest highlight in this debate in 2013 was the start of negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which intended to remove trade barriers between the EU and USA.

The prevailing opinion among respondents is that an agreement will be concluded by 2016, but that it will exclude the problematic areas of agriculture and the digital market. Less than one third of respondents believe in the conclusion of a complex partnership agreement. At the same time, there is a prevailing belief that there will be a further liberalization of trade with major EU economic partners; including, apart from the USA, Canada, Brazil, India, the Ukraine and Japan. Almost all respondents believe that the conclusion of free trade agreements is advantageous for the Czech Republic.

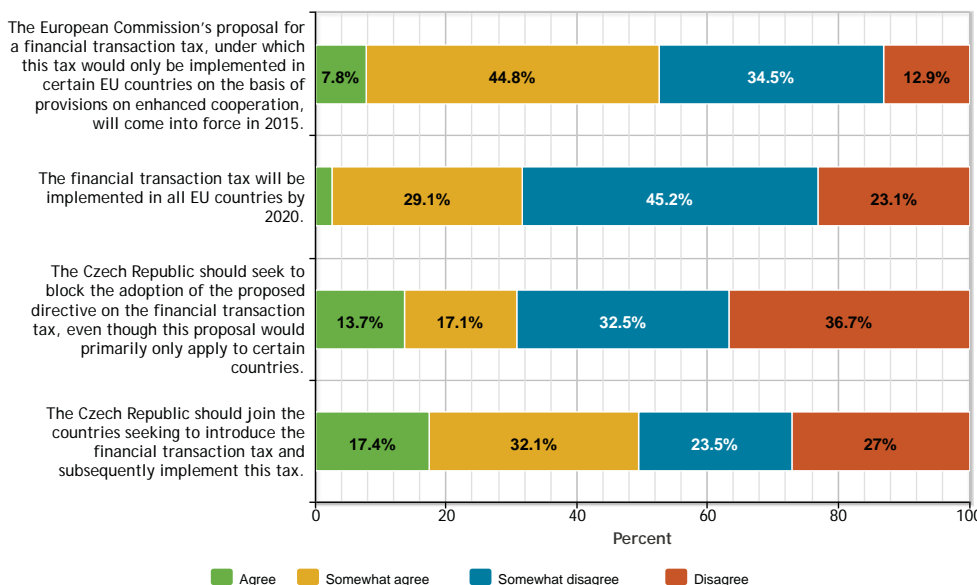


Development of EU Trade Policy

Do you agree with these propositions regarding EU trade policy?

IMPLEMENTATION OF A EUROPEAN FINANCIAL TRANSACTION TAX

The proposed financial transaction tax (FTT) is one of the “products” of the European financial crisis. However, the new regulation has not received the support of a sufficient number of Member States and legislation in the form of enhanced cooperation is currently under discussion. The Czech Republic was



Implementation of a European Financial Transaction Tax

Do you agree with these propositions regarding the implementation of a European financial transaction tax?

¹⁰ European Commission (2013): Taxation of the Financial Sector, European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/taxation/other_taxes/financial_sector/.

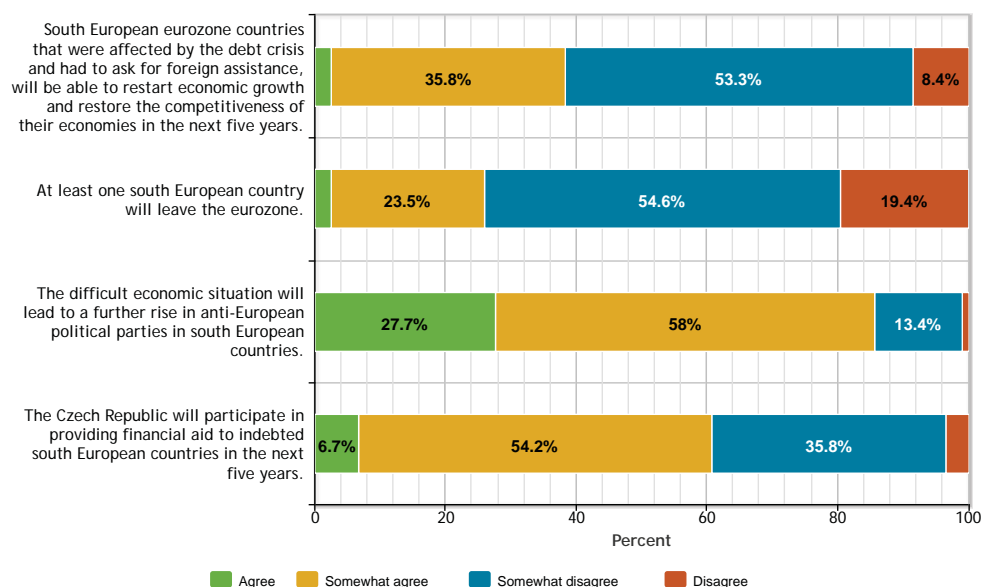
among the countries that rejected the introduction of a pan-European FTT and has not joined the enhanced cooperation initiative. The slight majority of respondents believe that the Commission's proposal to implement the FTT as part of enhanced cooperation will come into effect by 2015, while the Commission's optimistic vision actually envisages by mid 2014.¹⁰ The implementation of the FTT throughout the EU by 2020, as planned in the Commission's original proposal, is expected by less than one third of respondents. Although the bare majority of Czech European policy elites do not think the Czech Republic should adopt the FTT, only two fifths of respondents believe the Czech Republic should seek to block enhanced cooperation.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE SOUTHERN WING OF THE EUROZONE

The crisis of southern countries in the eurozone, in particular Greece, Portugal and Spain, is the most frequently discussed problem in today's EU. Even in the opinion of respondents, developments in the eurozone are the most important issue for Czech European policy. Czech European policy elites do not expect an improvement in the economic situation in these affected countries in the next five years, although at the same time, they don't expect the withdrawal of any southern countries from the eurozone. Maintaining the status quo however, will undoubtedly lead to a further rise in anti-European parties in these countries. Almost two thirds of respondents also believe that the Czech Republic will participate in providing financial aid to these indebted countries in the next five years.

Economic and Political Situation in the Southern Wing of the Eurozone

Do you agree with these propositions regarding the economic and political situation in countries of the so-called southern wing of the eurozone?



CONCLUSION: CZECH EUROPEAN POLICY IN DISILLUSION

The conclusions we have drawn following an evaluation of this questionnaire point to a number of challenges facing Czech European policy. Those implementing, influencing or providing qualified interpretations of European policy have doubts regarding its success. In their view, the Czech Republic is incapable of determining or asserting its interests in the EU. What's more, development is heading in a different direction than would be advantageous for the Czech Republic. The services market will never be fully liberalized, although progress in this specific area would be advantageous for the Czech Republic in strengthening the Single Market. The eurozone will continue to economically and institutionally integrate, despite Czech resistance. The institution that will strengthen the most will be the European Central Bank. Developments in the eurozone will be the most important issue for Czech European policy in the next decade and our closest allies in the EU are either countries that have already adopted the common currency (Slovakia, Germany), or which are trying to get as close to the eurozone as possible (Poland). Perhaps even for this reason, the majority of Czech European policy elites believe that the Czech Republic should seek to adopt the common currency and that its position outside the eurozone is disadvantageous for the Czech economy.

On the other hand, the belief that the Czech Republic will improve its ability to assert itself in the EU, and other individual results can be seen positively. Trade with global players will continue to be liberalized and the United Kingdom will not leave the European Union.

We believe that the results of this research presenting the preferences and expectations of European policy elites will contribute to restarting the debate on the Czech Republic's position in the EU. The key role in this process is played by politicians, who must lead the discussion on European policy, but whose interest in European affairs is, unfortunately, not very high. Without their strategic thinking, courage and acceptance of responsibility, it will be difficult for the Czech Republic to fully assert itself in the European Union.

ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (AMO)

Association for International Affairs is a non-governmental non-profit organization founded in 1997. The mission of AMO has been to contribute to a deeper understanding of international affairs through a broad range of educational and research activities. Thanks to its activities in the Czech Republic and abroad and long-term tradition, AMO has established itself as the Czech leading independent institution in the field of international relations and foreign policy.

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE ITS GOALS AMO STRIVES TO:

- formulate and publish briefings, research and policy papers;
- arrange international conferences, expert seminars, roundtables, public debates;
- organize educational projects;
- present critical assessments and comments on current events for local and international press;
- create vital conditions for growth of a new expert generation;
- support interest in international relations in the wider public domain;
- cooperate with like-minded local and international institutions.

AMO RESEARCH CENTER

The Research Center of the Association for International Affairs is a leading Czech think-tank, which is not bound to any political party or ideology. With its activities, it supports an active approach to foreign policy, provides an independent analysis of current political issues and encourages expert and public debate on related topics. The main goal of the Research Center is systematic observation, analysis and commentary on international affairs with special focus on Czech foreign policy.

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