

## **1. Ukraine and the EU – Membership or Partnership?**

### **The Czech Perspective**

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#### **1.1. Introduction**

The Czech Republic, as well as the other new Member States of the European Union, belongs to the group of EU countries most vigorously supporting the future EU enlargement. The support runs across the political spectrum as well as public opinion. According to the last Eurobarometer poll, as much as 65% of the Czech population supports further EU enlargement. Explicit anti-enlargement rhetoric cannot be found in the programme of any of the parliamentary parties. The strong support can be explained by relatively fresh accession memory, recognising the importance of the EU enlargement policy for creating a stable and democratic environment, but also by a genuine belief in the need for overcoming post-Cold War divisions in Europe, and the right of non-EU countries to stability and prosperity, which has changed the region of Central Europe in the last fifteen years beyond recognition.

However, the picture becomes more complex if we look at the individual potential candidates. While relatively prosperous Western European countries (Switzerland, Iceland, Norway) and Croatia enjoy very high support, poorer countries of the Western Balkans, Turkey and Ukraine are by far not so well off.

This chapter will look more in detail at how the EU aspirations of one important Eastern EU neighbour – Ukraine – are perceived in the Czech Republic. It will also try to provide some suggestions as to what factors might be a determinant of the Czech position on Ukraine and in what ways the Czech Republic is likely to treat Ukraine vis-à-vis its European aspirations.

#### **1.2. Czech Attitudes Towards the EU Enlargement and Ukraine in Particular**

When exploring the Czech attitudes towards the “European choice” of Ukraine, one has to acknowledge that this country does not represent a priority in the general discourse on future EU enlargement. This is despite the generally very warm welcome by both the political representation and the media of the outcome of the Orange Revolution in December 2004 and victory of the pro-European stream in creating the successive government. Despite this, the signals sent by the Czech politicians towards the Ukrainian political establishment were rather vague, communicating general support for the political and economic direction of the country but not making any clear signals of support to establish firmer links with the EU, such as a roadmap to the EU candidacy or the enhancement of relations within the European Neighbourhood Policy.

As far as public opinion is concerned, compared to other countries, the Czech Republic is not very receptive towards the idea of seeing Ukraine as an EU Member State in the foreseeable future. The latest two public opinion polls (Eurobarometer 64.2 and 63.4) even show a drop in

support for Ukrainian membership in the EU; while at the beginning of 2005 46% of people supported the membership of Ukraine and 45% opposed it, in June 2006 only 40% wanted Ukraine to join the EU while 49% opposed it. This trend is in sharp contrast to the public attitudes in most other new Member States, notably Poland (65% in favour, 19% against), Lithuania (67% in favour, 14% against) or Slovenia (66% in favour, 27% against). Thus, the Czech public opinion towards Ukraine exhibits a pattern rather similar to some old EU Member States than the one identified among most of the newcomers (e.g. in Denmark the respective figures are 41% for and 48% against, in Belgium 44% for and 52% against or in France 38% for and 48% against).

Providing an explanation for this trend is not easy. Firstly, the support for Ukraine to join the EU dropped among the new EU Member States as well, and in some cases it has been even more dramatic than in the Czech Republic. For instance in Poland (often viewed as the primary advocate in recognising Ukraine as a future EU candidate), the support decreased by 11% between spring and autumn 2005 (while in case of the Czech Republic it fell “only” 6%). The failing support for the membership of Ukraine might probably be explained by a possible mistrust towards future EU enlargement following the French and Dutch “no” to the Constitutional Treaty or difficult negotiations over the EU budget. However, it must be underlined that this might be part of a more general trend of convergence between the public opinion in the EU-15 and EU-10 (in terms of decreasing public support for further enlargement) rather than driven by motives specific to the Ukrainian case.

As far as the Czech political establishment is concerned, the rather lukewarm attitude towards Ukraine might partially stem from the highlighted internal problems encountered in the EU in 2005 over the unsure fate of the Constitutional Treaty and future direction of the EU. The second explanation is that Ukraine is not a top priority in terms of Czech views on the enlargement policy. The Czech diplomacy recognises the structured approach to enlargement policy based on previous EU commitments, thus pushing for a faster approach vis-à-vis countries with a clear membership perspective (Turkey, Western Balkans) and only then dealing with the eventual membership of the EU Eastern neighbours (such as Ukraine, Moldova, etc.). In balancing the importance of Ukraine as a strategic priority for the Czech diplomacy with concerns over the settlement of internal problems of the EU, the latter consideration clearly seems to outweigh the former one. The regional politics does not seem to bear much weight either. Despite the repeated calls of Poland on other EU Member States, and its Visegrád partners in particular, to take the Ukrainian calls for “European choice” more seriously, the Czech political class and diplomacy did not seem to respond very enthusiastically. The only noticeable political move in terms of recognising the political importance of the Orange Revolution was the lifting of fees for Czech visas for Ukrainian citizens as a response to the decision of the Ukrainian government in August 2005 to lift the visas for all EU citizens. However, this gesture was also more reactive than pro-active. Poland and Hungary negotiated asymmetrical visa regimes (not charging fees on visas) even before the EU accession, and most of the new Member States in the region (such as Slovakia or the Baltic countries) responded with the same move.

### **1.3. Public Perceptions of the Ukrainians and Ukraine in the Czech Society**

The feature that seems to dominate the Czech discourse on Ukraine is that of Ukraine as a source of cheap labour, especially in construction, household and retail sectors. Ukrainians are notorious for migrating to the Czech Republic for work, lured by higher salaries, cultural closeness (language barriers are not as large due to the common Slavonic roots of the Czechs

and Ukrainians) and relatively flexible conditions which make it possible for them to undertake jobs as self-employed individuals (although the legality of such a status is disputable and the system is known for being abused). The Ukrainian presence in the country is far from negligible; although the official statistics of long-term resident Ukrainians in the Czech Republic quote figures of around 70,000 (including those who have already acquired Czech citizenship, or some repatriated people of Czech origin, such as the so-called Volyně Czechs), the unofficial estimates might be as high as 200,000. This makes the Ukrainians the second largest migrant community after Slovaks who, however, since the split of Czechoslovakia have always enjoyed a preferential status compared to other foreigners.

The data available on the public attitudes towards Ukrainians does not seem to give much ground for optimism. In the March 2005 poll of the CVVM centre, the Ukrainians received one of the worst rankings among the foreigners surveyed – worse marks were awarded only to Turks, Kurds, Afghans, Iraqis and Palestinians (overall the survey included 24 nationalities). Out of the national minorities residing in the Czech Republic, the numbers were equally one of the worst, with only nationals of some Balkan countries and Romas receiving worse marks.<sup>1</sup>

The numerous and still growing Ukrainian community in the Czech Republic might potentially play a role in the perception of the Ukrainians among the Czechs, but also in the shift of the Czech policy on Ukraine. Examples of other countries show that if the migrant community is well organised and effective it can have an impact on policy-making processes in the host country. It would probably be too ambitious to expect the organisations representing Ukrainians to have an impact similar to the Israeli lobby with the US administration and Congress, as it has incomparable resources and building relations with the state institutions takes considerable time. However, smaller and less resourceful diasporas can be influential even in Europe, such as for example the Armenian organisations in different European countries who have with various degrees of success lobbied the countries on the issue of opening EU accession negotiations with Turkey (through conditioning this process on the recognition of the Armenian genocide by Turkey). Thus, depending on how well organised and goal-oriented the Ukrainian organisations in the Czech Republic are, they can bring the issue of the “European choice” of Ukraine more to the public debate. However, that would require a shift from the current focus on assisting the Ukrainian fellow citizens with integration in the Czech society or promoting Ukrainian culture into more strategic, policy oriented goals. So far, this does not seem to be the case. Many of the Ukrainians who come to the Czech Republic do so solely for the purpose of improving their own economic situation and that of their families back home, without necessarily wanting to acquire Czech citizenship and thus being less inclined to intervene in Czech politics.

The press coverage of Ukrainians seems to foster a rather negative perception of this community. The survey of media reporting on Ukrainians<sup>2</sup> seems to suggest that such coverage is mostly associated with criminality, namely murders and robberies. Stories on Ukrainian workers usually also point out cases associated with their illegal employment but also with the shortage of labour in some regions. It is also worth noting a group of articles which use the term “Ukrainian” as a parallel, synonym or idiom. For instance members of the ODS party used the reference to practices used in this party as those of the “Ukrainian mafia”.

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<sup>1</sup> This sample included the following nationalities: Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Germans, Jews, Vietnamese, Russians, Ukrainians, citizens of the Balkan countries and the Romas (ranked in decreasing order of popularity).

<sup>2</sup> Klvačová, P. and T. Bitrich (2003). “Hard to make out foreigners: How the foreigners are (not) written about in the Czech press.” *Multikulturální centrum Praha*.

Particularly the references to the “Ukrainian mafia” are rather widespread, without explaining the meaning of this idiom. Generally, the connotations in which the term “Ukrainian” is used are exclusively pejorative. On the contrary, references conveying rather positive attitudes towards Ukraine or Ukrainians, such as describing Ukrainian associations and their initiatives (such as celebrations of Ukrainian feasts), are fairly rare.

Reporting on Ukraine as a country has significantly changed during and after the Orange Revolution, with many journalists exhibiting sympathy to the changes there or even making parallels with the November 1989 events in Prague. However, the coverage of political changes was limited to serious media whose impact on the general Czech public opinion remains rather limited. This can explain a still negative prevailing attitude to the Ukrainians and a lack of interest in the European future of this country within the Czech society.

#### 1.4. Czech Activism towards Eastern Europe (the Czech “Eastern” Policy)

One could argue that the “Eastern dimension” was not the foremost focus of Czech foreign policy, at least since mid-1990s, certainly not compared to Poland or even Slovakia. Foreign policy activism focused on the NATO and EU accessions as prime foreign policy goals. The improvement of relations with immediate neighbours, especially Germany and Austria, was next on the agenda. However, in general, Czech foreign policy was aimed more westward rather than eastward in the whole course of the EU and NATO accession processes.

Odstraněno: or Hungary.

Once a member of these two organisations, it seems that the floor for refocusing the Czech policy would be greater. In fact, the Czech Foreign Ministry discovered that there could be an added value in having special “Eastern” expertise which would enable the country to project Czech interests through the EU institutions. However, in this sense one might think that the Czech interest in the East emerged too late. Poland has been developing the “Eastern agenda” and particularly the Ukrainian agenda consistently throughout the 1990s, and it has already made an impact at the EU level. Poland negotiated the postponement of the introduction of visas for Ukrainians as late as a few months prior to the EU accession, which made the impression in Brussels that this issue is really important. Polish government was one of the first to provide input into the first instruments underpinning the European neighbourhood policy. And finally Kwaśniewski (together with Adamkus) travelled to Kiev in December 2004 to engage on behalf of the EU in negotiating a solution to the electoral impasse.

The Eastern policy is re-emerging in the Czech foreign policy agenda, but Ukraine does not seem to be a key component of it. On the contrary, it could be argued that two of Ukraine’s neighbours, namely Russia and Belarus, are gaining more attention. Russia is emerging as a new power, as an important player in the world energy game and as a strategic partner to Europe in many areas (at least in the four common spaces in which it had concluded agreements with the EU). The growing awareness in Europe of this fact seems to be reflected in new initiatives such as the plans of the forthcoming German presidency on “anchoring” Russia in Europe.<sup>3</sup> Even the Czech diplomacy recognises that the incoming German presidency will play a key role in shaping future relations between the EU and Russia, not least because a new framework agreement between the two will start to be negotiated during this period. The Czech interest in Russia might further be facilitated by the fact that, unlike

<sup>3</sup> “Germany wants to bind Russia to the EU.” *EU Observer*, 1 September 2006 [http://euobserver.com/9/22312/?rk=1]

for other countries in the region (notably Poland<sup>4</sup> or the Baltic countries), relations with Russia are short of contentious issues, underlined by the recent visit of Putin to Prague. On the other hand, possible contentious points can still emerge, for instance in connection with the US Ministry of Defence proposal to locate part of the US anti-missile base (radars) on the Czech territory which has already received a very lukewarm reception in Moscow. It can be assumed that the line of the current Czech government towards Russia will be somewhat harder, taking into consideration a strongly pro-US tuning of some members of cabinet, especially in case of Alexandr Vondra, the Vice- premier for European issues.

The reason for the increasing interest of the Czech Republic in Belarus is driven by a different motive, which is related to the Czech perceived expertise on supporting transformation know-how. The Transformation Co-operation Unit (TRANS) established in July 2004 focuses on Belarus – along with Cuba – as a primary country of interest although recently the scope of focus has been extended to include countries such as Ukraine, Moldova or selected countries of Western Balkans (Serbia and Bosnia). Also the government has approved in March 2006 additional funding for the Czech NGOs co-operating with Belarus opposition. Similarly, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate established a special subcommittee focused on Belarus, aiming at expanding support for the Belarus dissent.

Odstraněno: recently established

Odstraněno: Recently

The prevailing position of the Czech Foreign Ministry is that in the current state of affairs it is unrealistic to push for an explicit recognition of the European choice of Ukraine which would most markedly be demonstrated by the candidate status, although strategically the Czechs could align with the Poles on the issue. One can often hear from Czech diplomats that the Czechs and Poles follow the same aims, only the means differ. The key element on which the Czech diplomacy is focusing is the negotiation of the new EU-Ukraine agreement after the expiry of the current Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA)<sup>5</sup>, which could come to force around 2008 and the negotiating mandate will be brought forward soon. One of the concerns is that as the EU-Ukraine agreement will be concluded after the new agreement with Russia (the PCA with Russia expires in 2007), the content of the EU-Russia treaty will be simply be copied in the new agreement between the EU and Ukraine. Another concern is that perhaps too much effort will be devoted to the preamble to the new agreement, with the assumption that the Ukrainian representation (as well as the Polish one) will focus too much on at least some implicit recognition of membership aspirations, and not much attention will be paid to the real substance of the new treaty.

On the other hand, quite a lot of progress can be achieved on the economic integration of Ukraine with the EU with the conclusion of a free trade agreement and the creation of a free trade zone. Although the Czech position is still not clear, a swift liberalisation of trade could possibly damage some of the Czech producers in areas such as steel or agriculture. Similarly, the accession of Ukraine to the WTO is seen as a priority which could supposedly be realistically achieved by the end of 2006 and the process could be easier than with Russia (as for Russia it will be difficult to establish a bilateral trade deal with the US, for Ukraine the only contentious countries are Taiwan and Kyrgyzstan where the agreement could be found more easily).

Odstraněno: can

Odstraněno: be

<sup>4</sup> The evidence of very complicated relations between Poland and Russia witnessed at EU level was a recent Polish veto over the start of negotiating the new Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between EU and Russia because of allegedly unfounded restrictions on the export of Polish meat to Russia.

Naformátováno: Čeština

<sup>5</sup> Partnership and Co-operation Agreement, which came in force in 1998 and represents the basic legal framework for the relations between Ukraine and the EU. It will expire in 2008.

Similar importance is attached to the visa facilitation agreement with Ukraine, seen as one of the tangible outcomes of mutual rapprochement between the EU and Ukraine. However, the current wording of the agreement (initialled during the EU – Ukraine summit in Helsinki in October 2006) will in fact imply a less liberal regime applied currently by the new Member States of the EU who do not charge fees for visas to any category of applicants. This possibility will have to be lifted with the full integration of the new Member States into the Schengen area (expected to happen on 1 January 2008). The visa issue continues to be of prime importance. Apart from the already mentioned lifting of fees on Czech visas for Ukrainian citizens, the Czech Republic decided to open a new consulate-general in Donetsk in Eastern Ukraine. This – apart from making life easier for visa applicants in Eastern Ukraine - illustrates the effort of the Czech diplomacy to engage in less “traditional” and more pro-Russian regions of Ukraine, i.e. generally in the eastern part of the country.

Odstraněno: 1

Ukraine is seen as an important element in the future development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, European Security and Defence Policy and energy security in Europe. Especially for the Czech Republic Ukraine does matter as a transition country, as most of the supplies of gas from Russia run through its territory. The attitude of Ukraine is also critical vis-à-vis the Transnistrian conflict, especially towards the EU Border Assistance Mission launched in this disputed territory. However, less alignment can be seen in relation to Belarus, where the Czech Republic is pushing for a harder stance towards the Lukashenka regime at the EU level, while Ukraine has so far kept a rather cautious approach. It has not for instance joined the EU-wide travel ban on high-ranking representatives of the Lukashenka regime due to economic interests in Belarus which could possibly damage the Ukrainian business interests therein.

The Czech Foreign Ministry proposed an action plan focusing on areas such as energy or the environment, but it was noted that this initiative was met with rather lukewarm interest on the part of the Ukrainian political representation. However, the situation seems to be improving, and an inter-departmental commission should be established soon to help Ukraine progress on these issues.

Some expectations can be associated with the Czech presidency of the EU in the first half of 2009. It might be that the new agreement with Ukraine will be concluded under the Czech presidency, which would give the country some additional leverage on influencing the outcome of negotiations. Most probably, the negotiations will be concluded before 2009. Apart from this, the Czech government will have many other important issues on the agenda for its EU presidency, such as the EU budget reform, the preparations for the appointment for the European Parliament elections and for the appointment of the new European Commission, and possibly the settlement of the Constitutional Treaty (it is probable that another Intergovernmental Conference will proceed under the Czech presidency). How much space will be allotted for Ukraine is thus a question, and the composition of the government and who is going to be in charge of foreign affairs might be an important factor here.

### **1.5. Internal Developments in the Czech Republic, the EU and in Ukraine Itself**

These factors are probably not specific to the Czech attitudes towards the EU aspirations of Ukraine. They reflect an interconnection between the perception of continuing enlargement being complemented by ongoing deepening of the EU. On this issue, the position of the Czech political representation is not clear. It is likely that a lot will depend on the current

constellation of the Czech government. While the centre-left government might see the deepening, mostly manifested by resolving the EU constitutional crisis, as a necessary precondition for opening any EU accession prospects for the countries who do not currently enjoy a candidate status, the centre-right government might be willing to proceed with enlargement even if the constitutional issue is left unsettled. The current climate in the EU, however, is not very favourable – demonstrated recently by statements of Jose Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission (which has always been perceived as a defender of EU enlargement) proposing to halt further enlargement promises until the constitutional issue is settled.

Secondly, the internal developments in Ukraine will play a crucial role, too. The rather lukewarm reaction to the Orange Revolution compared to Poland as well as the outcome of the 2006 parliamentary elections reflect the lack of conviction that Ukraine has made a final choice. Ukraine is still very much perceived and portrayed as a country with deep internal divisions regarding its foreign policy orientation (e.g. having an “orange” west and “blue” east), with a strong influence of the Kremlin and a buffer zone between the EU and Russia.<sup>6</sup> With the post-election situation with the Orange camp disintegrating and the deal between the two originally rival camps, that of Yushchenko and Yanukovych re-emerging, the enthusiasm for supporting Ukraine on its way to the EU might grow even stronger.<sup>7</sup> Recent developments show that Yanukovych as the new prime minister might be interested in keeping a balanced relationship with both Moscow and Brussels and to reach some tangible deals with the EU such as an enhanced free trade agreement<sup>8</sup> rather than pushing for an explicit recognition of candidate aspirations. However, the reaction in the Czech press to the outcome of the elections did not mark such negative reactions and the fact that Yanukovych was given a chance to form a government is actually perceived as a sign of the growing maturity of the young Ukrainian democracy.<sup>9</sup> From the Czech perspective, however, it seems that Yanukovych will be forging the relations with the EU while his enthusiasm for Ukraine integrating more closely with NATO is seen as potentially posing more problems for its relations with Moscow. This attitude seems to be confirmed by some recent gestures of Yanukovych. We can recall a harsh criticism of foreign minister Boris Tarasyuk who in January 2007 on the official visit in Prague defended pro-European choice of Ukraine, stating that Ukraine should be integrated to both EU and NATO as soon as possible<sup>10</sup>. Yanukovych not only disputed legitimacy and legality of the whole visit (which was allegedly not approved by him) but he even blamed Tarasyuk for damaging the interests of Ukraine and threatened with prosecuting him.

## **1.6. Conclusions: What Might Change the Czech Perception of Ukraine and Make It More Supportive of EU Membership Aspirations?**

To conclude, it is clear that the reasons why the Czech Republic could become more enthusiastic about supporting Ukraine on its road to the EU lie with the developments in the EU, in the Czech Republic and in Ukraine.

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<sup>6</sup> See e.g. Robejšek, P., Ukrajina za hranicí nové Evropy (Ukraine beyond New Europe's Boundaries), *Tyden*, 3 March 2006. [<http://www.tyden.cz/text.asp?rid=8&show=text&tid=20371>]

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Beatty, A., “Yanukovych touts trade deal with the EU.” *European Voice*, Vol. 12 No. 33, September 2006.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Černý, A., “The Ukraine Has Changed.” *Hospodářské noviny*, 4 August 2006

<sup>10</sup> <http://aktualne.centrum.cz/zahranici/evropa/clanek.phtml?id=332312>

At the EU level, the basic pre-condition is overcoming what is at least perceived to be the major crisis, following the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by two founding members. Unfortunately, the Czech Republic, also given quite turbulent developments internally, has almost forgotten the issue which was definitely not a priority in the last year.<sup>11</sup> The political representation will have to formulate a position and discuss and suggest possible scenarios for solving the current deadlock, which will ultimately become a necessary pre-condition for continuing enlargement that seems to be so much supported by the political establishment.

The government which won the vote of confidence in January 2007 will most probably develop a pro-active eastern policy including relations with Ukraine, especially through transformation co-operation which now focuses on Ukraine as one of the priority areas and maybe will even make this area one of the priorities for the Czech presidency of the EU in 2009. But a big question mark hangs over the fragile stability and opaque future of this government.

**Odstraněno:** Given the complicated outcome of the June 2006 elections, with an unclear prospect of forming a stable government, the issue might not top the agenda until the solution of the domestic political impasse is found, such as grand coalition of two major parties (the ODS and CSSD) or an early election.

Further on part of the Czech Republic, several additional factors will play a role. Firstly, the “Eastern” agenda of the Czech foreign policy is coming to the fore again. However, it is not clear whether it can rather act as a catalyst or an inhibitor of a more supportive and active Czech policy vis-à-vis Ukraine. The complicated triangular relations between Russia, the EU and Ukraine might make the Czech Republic oscillate between the three parties, keeping the fragile balance rather than deciding on a confrontation.

The gradual emancipation of the Ukrainian community in the Czech Republic might mark some shifts in the Czech positions, too. So far, the image is predominantly negative, associated with crime (including organised crime) or illegal employment. Changing this negative stereotype can be precipitated by, for example, having a success story such as a Ukrainian immigrant achieving a high Czech political position or occupying one of the top positions in the Czech business. A more robust programme for the integration of the largely illegal Ukrainian labour migrants could make a difference as well. It will send a signal that the Czech Republic needs labour migration and is able to create a framework for its regulation, as well as for the integration of the Ukrainian migrant community. This idea is already shared by some parts of public administration and politicians, demonstrated by the inclusion of Ukraine in the programme of managed labour migration by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Furthermore, the Ukrainian migrant community needs to become more self-conscious. Once it shifts from focusing on merely helping the Ukrainian expatriates to handle the formalities regarding their residence and labour paperwork or from promoting Ukrainian culture to more politically articulated stances, the Czech political representation and media will start to take it more seriously. So far, however, it seems that the Ukrainian organisations do not have such ambitions.

Business can have an impact on the Czech policy towards Ukraine, once Czech investment in and trade with Ukraine start to grow. The growth of trade has been immense since the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU, growing by 50.6 % in 2005 and by as much as 80.9 % in the first half of 2006,<sup>12</sup> and the rapidly developing Ukrainian economy has a huge potential for attracting the Czech exporters in traditionally strong areas such as machinery, engineering, cars, etc. Also investment is starting to attract more attention of Czech companies, such as the PPT group investing between 45 to 60 million USD into the Ukrainian banking sector. Other potentially big investors such as CEZ (which is already making acquisitions in some Western

<sup>11</sup> The Czech Republic did not ratify the Constitutional Treaty and did not even set terms for the ratification.

<sup>12</sup> Available at: <http://www.businessinfo.cz/cz/clanky/ukrajina-souhrnne-informace/obchodni-a-ekonomicka-spoluprace-s-cr/1001236/24747/>

Balkan countries) or Skoda might follow this example. The businesses will have an interest in a more transparent regulatory environment, a more liberal trade regime, clearer rules of public procurement, etc. The best way of doing this is through closer links with the EU, so the businesses can actually become one of the main supporters of closer links between Ukraine and the EU.

One must be aware of potential dangers of this trend though. For instance recent proposal of the European Commission to force the car producers to cut down the carbon dioxide emissions was immediately interpreted by the Czech media as eventually leading to moving the car productions from the Czech Republic to the East (explicitly mentioning Ukraine) because of the savings incurred. Although this was an isolated statement so far, it must be borne in mind that in the future even in Central Europe we can face some tricky debates about delocalisation and moving the production to the East where the cheap labour is which we recently witnessed in the EU-15.

Tourism can be an important incentive for raising the interest of the Czechs in Ukraine and eliminating some of the stereotypes currently present in the Czech milieu. Ukraine is not the most typical tourist destination, however, in terms of number of trips of people visiting this country it ranks quite high – in the 16<sup>th</sup> place in terms of number of trips undertaken by Czechs in 2005.<sup>13</sup> The statistics available do not reveal how many people actually visit Ukraine for leisure and how many for business. However, it can be assumed that a more proactive promotion of Ukraine as an interesting tourist destination could lead to a better acquaintance of the Czechs with Ukraine. This results in a more positive perception of it as a “European” country. This is, however, a task for the Ukrainian government and tourism promotion services.

Given the current state of affairs in the EU, the Czech Republic and Ukraine, it cannot be realistically expected that the Czech Republic will become a strong advocate for recognizing Ukraine as a candidate for EU membership. The Czech Republic will rather try to foster relations between the two entities through closer economic integration, such as supporting Ukraine’s accession to the WTO or forging an enhanced agreement with the EU, leading to a gradual establishment of a free trade zone between them. Although strategically it is important for the Czech Republic that Ukraine makes a ‘European’ rather than ‘Russian choice’, the Czech political representation as well as diplomacy does not feel strong enough to influence this decision. Moreover, the internal political situation in the Czech Republic is unstable and problematic following the outcome of the 2006 parliamentary elections. Without a strong political mandate, the Czech policy on Ukraine is not likely to move forward. Thirdly, the same would apply to the internal political situation in Ukraine itself. While Yushchenko after he took the presidential office at the beginning of 2005 sent strong signals to the West that it is the primary intention of his new government to foster the pro-EU orientation of his country, the Yanukovych government, which emerged in 2006, is likely to take a more cautious course, paying attention to a balanced relationship with both Brussels and Moscow.

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<sup>13</sup> Available at: [http://www.mmr.cz/upload/files/cestovni\\_ruch/060714\\_cr\\_v\\_cr\\_aktualizace.doc](http://www.mmr.cz/upload/files/cestovni_ruch/060714_cr_v_cr_aktualizace.doc)