

XIX Economic Forum



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Weimar Triangle: Is a common Eastern policy possible?

Panel discussion

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The Weimar Triangle was established in 1991 by the ministers of foreign affairs of France, Germany and Poland in order to promote regional cooperation in Europe. This mechanism has proved to be an important instrument used to promote European aspirations of Poland and debate on the EU enlargement. Yet, the old form of the organization has proved currently to be ineffective and it has no longer served such important function as in the 1990's and during the years immediately before the EU enlargement in 2004. One of the most important issues on the current political agenda in Europe is the policy towards its neighbours. It has been developing in different directions, and the most of important of them are: the *Eastern Partnership* and the *Union for the Mediterranean*. Each country participating in the Triangle has different preferences as regards the neighbourhood policy. As long as the Mediterranean policy is crucial for France, interests of Poland and Germany are focused on Eastern Europe. The European Neighbourhood Policy and its latest embodiment - the Eastern Partnership are addressed to the countries of the former Soviet Union and assume promotion of European values in these countries and gradual economic integration of the region, however, without setting any dates of prospective membership in the EU structures. The Eastern Partnership has extended its area of interest to Belarus and opened opportunities to carry out individual programmes also with Russian involvement. Yet, it has turned out that all these programmes are insufficient and not bold enough to translate in reality into the shape of the European policy in the region. The participants in a debate, held during the XIX Economic Forum, attempted to determine the main parameters for a common Eastern policy. However, to make it possible, cooperation on the line Warsaw-Berlin-Paris must necessarily be restored and priorities of the European Eastern policy need to be discussed together.

The debate was attended by: H.E. François Barry Delonghamps - Ambassador of France in Poland; Natalia B. Kondratieva, Moscow State Institute of International Relations; Józef Oleksy, former Prime Minister and Marshall of the Polish Parliament;

Prof. Friedbert Pflüger, former Deputy Minister of Defense of Germany and currently a Member of the Board of CDU; Volodymyr Połochało, Chairman of the Education Committee in the Supreme Council of Ukraine; Prof. Gert Weisskirchen, Foreign Policy Spokesman of SPD in German Bundestag and Marek Ziółkowski from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The debate was organized and moderated by Prof. **Klaus-Heinrich Standke**, Chairman of the Committee for Support of German-French-Polish Cooperation ('Weimar Triangle').

Ambassador Barry Delongchamps made it clear that there exists no rivalry between the Union for the Mediterranean on one side and the Eastern Policy of the EU on the other. In the contrary, both are two sides of the same coin. Gert Weisskirchen stated, among other things, that the Eastern policy of the EU must be more open and promote firmly European values, which transform social awareness in neighbourhood countries. Friedbert Pflüger strongly opted for a clear definition of the common Eastern policy, which would support the countries aspiring for membership in the EU. Volodymyr Połochało emphasized that towards such countries as Ukraine, which has continuously struggled with a crisis among the political elites, it is necessary to support civil society institutions, which must have clear support in the civil societies of the Union. The point is not that the politicians need signs and signals, but rather that the citizens expect to be noticed as subjects of policy and invited to cooperation.

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