

Prague Social Europe Conference 2017

“Globalization and European cohesion”

The European project has always been understood as a tool for improving quality of lives of the European citizens. Recently, we can observe that this goal faces some serious challenges – whether in the form of globalization, lack of convergence within the EU, or rising social and economic inequalities. Prague Social Europe Conference 2017, organized by the Ministry of Foreign affairs of the Czech Republic, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Prag, Ecumenical Academy and Masaryk Democratic Academy, will explore these challenges and answer some of the pressing questions as they pertain to social aspects of Europe.

April 27

European project coping with the globalization setback

Globalization was always perceived as both a threat and an opportunity. However the outcomes of globalization are recently seen as more bleak than exciting. The rise of populism in the European states, financial scandals such as Panama papers or the increase in Euroscepticism are all often interpreted as failings of globalization. How can we sustain the European project in this environment? First day of the conference will focus on questions such as these.

15:30 – 16:00 Registration

16:00 – 16:30 Opening Remarks

Bohuslav Sobotka (Prime Minister of the Czech Republic)

Anne Seyfferth (Director of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Prague)

Vladimír Špidla (Director of Masaryk Democratic Academy)

16:30 – 17:15 Keynote Speech

Paul Mason (Visiting Professor, University of Wolverhampton; Freelance Journalist)

17:15 – 17:45 Coffee Break

17:45 – 19:15 Panels

Great Hall

Between neoliberalism and protectionism:

European project as a victim of the globalization setback?

Almost ten years after the crisis, the world keeps blowing economic bubbles and contemplating new crises. While the economic problems were systemic, the costs of the crisis were born by ordinary citizens, mostly in deindustrialised regions due to austerity policy largely encouraged by European institutions. Income and wealth inequality is rising and citizens have lost their trust in the benefits of globalisation and free trade, which – for many – are closely linked with the European project. European citizens in particular do not feel that the social order has become fairer and more equal which leads to critical political situations epitomised by the British referendum. What should be the ways forward from this situation?

Chair: Aleš Chmelař (The Office of the Government of the Czech Republic)

- **Petr Drulák** (Czech Ambassador to France, Political Scientist)
- **Andrzej Leder** (Professor, Polish Academy of Sciences)

Mirror Hall

Populism – challenging a status quo in Europe for better or worse

Populist movements in the western world under close scrutiny.

In recent period there has been an obvious increase in anti-system sentiments, protest vote, as well as anger, fear, insecurity, across the Western world. From Brexit referendum to the recent U.S. election, populist and anti-establishment groups seem to benefit from these trends, while left-wing and progressive forces, primarily social democrats, socialist and labour parties, seem to be the main losers. How can populist challenges be addressed without falling into the trap of overusing the term “populist” as an universal delegitimizing formula? In other words, what can we learn from the populist era?

Chair: Kateřina Kňapová (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs)

- **Francisco Panizza** (Professor, London School of Economics and Political Science)
- **Václav Štětka** (Lecturer, Loughborough University)
- **Lasse Thomassen** (Senior Lecturer, University of London)

19:15 – 20:15 Dinner

April 28

“Center - Periphery” through the optics of globalization

The concept of the centre - periphery cleavage is well known to both political scientists and practitioners. Whether we take in a literal sense - e.g. looking at Prague, with over 170% of EU average GDP, comparing to 70% for the rest of the Czech Republic - or if we change our perspective and look to a Europe as such. The idea of new EU member states converging towards the standards of the Union remains ever-present in domestic debate in these countries and in the EU as a whole. Exploring the concept of the centre - periphery division would be a topic for the second day of the conference.

9:30 – 10:00 Registration

10:00 – 10:45 Keynote Speech

Maria João Rodrigues (Member of the European Parliament, Committee on Employment and Social Affairs)

10:45 – 11:15 Coffee Break

11:15 – 12:45 Panels

Great Hall

Towards social convergence: role of the EU

EU as an agent of social justice. More Europe in Social Europe?

The panel will explore the role of the EU in ensuring social justice and promoting social convergence among Member States. The proposed European Pillar of Social Rights is often seen as constituting a step towards a stronger social dimension of the EMU and the single market. There is renewed debate on more ambitious proposals, such as an EU unemployment benefit scheme, as well as politically contentious ideas, such as an EU-wide minimum wage. Going forward, what is the appropriate toolbox for the EU to promote social convergence? How viable is a vision of a common EU social policy? What are the main political fault lines and how to overcome them?

Chair: Michal Šimečka (Institute of International Relations Prague)

- **László Andor** (Former European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion)
- **Allan Larsson** (Special Adviser on the European Pillar of Social Rights, European Commission)
- **Terezie Písařová** (Representative to the European Parliament, Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic)

Mirror Hall

Not forgetting the countryside – global challenges for rural areas

Structural disadvantages of rural areas in the era of globalized pressure: how should we address them?

With ongoing process of globalization, we discover that automatization tends to be much easier in industries that are tightly connected to rural areas, leading to faster decreases in job opportunities and in precarization in these areas. Economic structure of cities is also more tightly connected with capital revenues and globalization. Both of these factors lead to the reproduction of traditional “labour - capital” divide on a new basis - “city - countryside”. Globalization creates clusters of effectivity and activity in urban areas, leaving periphery to its own devices. How can we address this structural pressure and create a sustainable and socially just environment for rural areas?

Chair: Markéta Vinkelhoferová (Ecumenical Academy Prague)

- **Milan Ftáčnik** (Former Mayor of Bratislava, Slovakia)
- **Libor Prudký** (Sociologist, Charles University in Prague)
- **Jitka Rychtaříková** (Professor, Charles University in Prague)

12:45 Closing Remarks, Lunch