

### Central European Update

#### Poland

On 4 June Poland's new centrist Democratic Party announced that its candidate in October's presidential election will be **Henryka Bochniarz**, a former minister of industry and currently head of a private employers association. The first round of Poland's presidential poll is set for 9 October, following legislative elections on 25 September.

\* \* \*

Polish President **Aleksander Kwasniewski** said on 7 June that he would consider postponing the Polish referendum on the EU Constitutional Treaty depending on the results of the upcoming EU summit on 16-17 June. Kwasniewski's statement contradicts that of the Polish government on 6 June calling for the referendum to be held as soon as possible. Declining public support for the referendum was cited as the main reason for its possible postponement.

\* \* \*

A survey conducted by the PBS polling agency on 8 June, following the defeat of the EU constitution in France and the Netherlands, showed that Polish support for the treaty is waning. According to the poll, only 40 percent of Poles support the constitution, compared to 64 percent in a CBOS survey conducted in February.

\* \* \*

Poland's port city of Szczecin will host the 13<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Session of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) on 9-13 June. Poland cur-

rently holds the presidency of the CBSS, which includes Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden, and the European Commission. According to the Polish ministry of foreign affairs, the main objective of the summit will be to develop new modes of economic and political cooperation between the EU and the Baltic Sea region. Some non-EU CBSS states have expressed reservations about such an objective. Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Yakovenko stated on 8 June that while the EU's role in the region is highly important, the CBSS should not become an "auxiliary forum for the Russia-EU dialogue".

#### Czech Republic

Czech Interior Minister **Frantisek Bublan** asserted on 3 June that EU border controls should be lifted for Czechs in late 2007, when Brussels plans to extend the Schengen area to new member states. EU ministers are debating the introduction of a new generation of the Schengen information system SISII, whose launch in the spring of 2007 is a necessary condition for Schengen expansion.

\* \* \*

On 7 June Czech Prime Minister **Jiri Paroubek** announced that the UK's decision to suspend its referendum on the EU constitution, coupled with the French and Dutch rejections, have made it "impossible" for the Czech Re-

public to continue with ratification plans. The government had expressed its resolve to forge ahead with an \$8 million information campaign on the treaty by the mid-June EU summit. After a meeting with his Slovak counterpart **Mikulas Dzurinda**, Paroubek said that both leaders might support a possible extension of the two year deadline for the ratification process.

\* \* \*

On 8 June Czech President **Vaclav Klaus** received the European Regional Integration prize in the Austrian city of Sankt Polten. Klaus was awarded the prize by Lower Austria and Krems University for preserving equality and diversity among regions within a united Europe.

#### Hungary

**Laszlo Solyom** was elected Hungary's new president on 7 June after three rounds of voting in parliament. The ballot caused rifts within the governing coalition after the junior Free Democrats refused to support the candidate of the bigger coalition partner, the Socialists. Solyom is a constitutional lawyer who served as president of the Constitutional Court between 1990 and 1998, and does not belong to any political party. Although in Hungary the post of president is largely symbolic, Solyom will serve as commander of the armed forces and he will also have the power to send back

legislation for further parliamentary review.

#### Slovakia

The French and Dutch rejection of the European Constitution also cast doubts on whether the introduction of the euro among new member states will be a smooth process. However, Slovak Finance Minister **Ivan Miklos** said that the debate over the constitution should have no relation to the euro because the current level of political integration is sufficient for monetary cohesion. Miklos supports efforts in Slovakia to adopt the euro by 2009.

\* \* \*

Slovakia's unemployment rate in May was at its lowest level in nine years, falling to 11.38 percent. Labor Minister **Ludovit Kanik** is optimistic about the decrease and hopes to bring joblessness below 10 percent in the coming months. Slovak real wages also grew by 7 percent on average. Regional differences remain however, as the unemployment is twice as high in central Slovakia than the national average.



Featured Photo: Wawel Hill, Krakow, Poland

### Baltic States Update

#### Latvia

The Latvian government sent its unsigned border agreement with Russia to the Latvian Constitutional Court on 7 June for judicial review. The document underscores that Riga has no territorial claims to the area near Pytalovo, which was annexed and incorporated in the Russian Federation by the Soviet government in 1944. Last month, the Russian government refused to sign the agreement alleging

that Riga's insistence that Moscow acknowledge the 1922 border treaty would inspire territorial demands from other neighboring states. The month-long stalemate between the Russian and Latvian governments has also led to an overall decline in bilateral trade.

#### Lithuania

Lithuanian President **Valdas Adamkus** met with Spanish Prime Minister **Jose Luis Rodri-**

**guez Zapatero** from 6-8 June during an official state visit. Among the topics of discussion was the upcoming EU summit on the future of the troubled EU Constitutional Treaty. Lithuania and Spain were among the first of ten EU member states to approve the treaty. Both leaders advocated that the ratification process continue despite the recent French and Dutch votes so that each member state could assert its position.

*Continued on p. 2*

## Baltic States Update Contd.

### Lithuania contd.

A delegation of Lithuanian parliamentarians traveled to Tbilisi, Georgia on 7 June for an official state visit with Georgian President **Mikhail Saakashvili** and other government officials. They discussed Georgia's prospects for EU and NATO integration. The Lithuanian authorities emphasized the need to strengthen Georgian efficacy in the realm of justice and home affairs. The chairman of the Lithuanian parliament, **Arturas Paulauskas**, pledged financial assistance for institution-building and personnel training.

\* \* \*

Lithuanian Defense Minister **Gediminas Kirkilas** announced that his government is

preparing to send 70 troops to Afghanistan to lead a NATO provincial reconstruction team (PRT). The Lithuanian contingent, scheduled to depart for Kabul on 9 June, will join troops from Denmark, Iceland, and the United States and will concentrate on reconstruction efforts in Ghore province. According to the Lithuanian parliament, the current number of 290 internationally deployed troops is expected to increase to 420 by 2007.

### Estonia

The Estonian parliament postponed its vote on the ratification of the EU constitution, originally scheduled for 4 June. Though most Estonian legislators support the treaty, they cited the

need for intense debate at next week's EU summit on the future of European integration.

\* \* \*

In a June 7 speech in parliament, Estonian Foreign Minister **Urmis Paet** advocated the need for a clearer and more unified EU policy towards Russia. Following the 18 May signing of the Estonian-Russian border treaty, relations between the two states have improved. In his speech, Paet stressed the importance of resolving outstanding visa issues and strengthening bilateral cooperation in other spheres. Paet hopes that Estonia's border treaty with Russia will be ratified by parliament and that Latvia will soon conclude its own border agreement with Moscow.

## Southeast European Update

### Croatia

During a visit to the OSCE Mission in Zagreb on 7 June, Croatian Prime Minister **Ivo Sanader**, reaffirmed that reconciliation, cooperation with the UN tribunal, return of refugees, restitution of property, and Euro-Atlantic integration constitute the government's priorities. Sanader told OSCE Mission Chief **Jorge Fuentes Monzonis-Vilallonga** that Croatia is also working to improve relations with its neighbors and to act as a stabilizing force in the region.

\* \* \*

Croatian and Slovenian government officials met on 10 June on the Croatian island of Brijuni to sign a tax treaty and agreements on economic and cultural cooperation. The summit also focused on outstanding issues such as the ongoing border dispute and the jointly owned nuclear power plant located in Slovenia. Slovenian Environmental Minister **Janez Podobnik** attended the joint session, despite the accusations for allegedly violating Croatian law when he visited a town in the disputed part of the Slovenian-Croatian border last year. Croatia's interior ministry had no plans of obstructing Podobnik's entry into the country.

### Slovenia

According to a report by the Slovenian news agency STA on 2 June, the EU summit later this

month will show what kind of effect the constitutional crisis will have on negotiations over the EU budget. Officials in Ljubljana are hoping that the new budget agreement will be adopted before the end of June, as Slovenia is set to surpass 75 percent of the EU's average GDP and will then receive a smaller volume of structural funds. Setbacks in the ratification of the EU constitution could also curb further EU enlargement, despite Ljubljana's hopes for speedy EU accession for the Western Balkan countries.

\* \* \*

The U.S. State Department released its report "Trafficking in Persons 2005" on 3 June, urging Slovenia to fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking in persons. The report states that the government should focus on enforcement procedures for convicting traffickers under its new anti-trafficking legislation. During the reporting period, Slovenian authorities accounted for nine trafficking-related investigations, one ongoing prosecution, and no convictions.

### Bulgaria

Bulgaria underwent its fifth troop rotation in Iraq and its contingent was decreased from 460 to 400 soldiers. Sofia has begun planning for a complete withdrawal by the end of 2005. However, army chief-of-staff, **General Nikola Kolev**, said that this would not end Bul-

garia's involvement in Iraq's reconstruction. Kolev stated that if a political decision were to be reached in parliament, Bulgaria could send another battalion even after the current deadline. The five Bulgarian military instructors, due to participate in NATO's training mission, will continue with their duties, while the UN has also asked Sofia to send a 120-strong contingent to protect UN offices in Iraq.

\* \* \*

On 7 May a Libyan court acquitted nine police officers and a doctor accused of torturing the Bulgarian medics sentenced to death for allegedly infecting Libyan children with HIV. The nurses, who were arrested in 1999, complained that they had been tortured, beaten, and given electric shocks during interrogations. The lawyer for the Libyan policemen said that they were acquitted due to lack of evidence and not for political reasons. Bulgarian authorities have stated that they will

seek compensation for the illegal arrest and torture of the nurses.

### Romania

Romanian President **Traian Basescu** said on 6 June that the three kidnapped Romanian journalists in Iraq were victims of a botched plan by their Iraqi-American guide and a Syrian-born businessman. The captors had demanded that Romania withdraw its troops from Iraq, but after the government refused to comply the hostages were released. Romanian prosecutors have issued arrest warrants for the suspected kidnapers.

\* \* \*

According to a statement by the National Statistics Board issued on 7 June, Romania's economy grew by 5.9 percent in real terms in the first quarter of 2005 compared to the same period last year. The country's industrial output for the first four months of the year grew by 5.9 percent, while retail sales rose by 20.4 percent, compared to the same period in 2004.

## Other Developments

### Kaliningrad

On 9 June the Russian State Duma extended the status of Kaliningrad as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) for a period of 25 years. The move, which also envisions the creation of a customs-free zone, is expected to greatly improve the poor economic and social conditions in

Kaliningrad and the negative spill-over effects for its neighbors. The vote coincided with the first day of the Ministerial Session of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), which among other questions, aims to address border crossings and customs affairs issues in the region.

*Select Briefing* is produced by the Eastern Europe Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a private, tax-exempt institution focusing on international public policy issues. Its research is nonpartisan and nonproprietary.

CSIS does not take specific policy positions. The CSIS Eastern Europe Project monitors daily developments throughout the East, Central, and Southeast European regions. This publication highlights news in the new European Union (EU) member states, as well as in the countries scheduled to join in the next round of EU enlargement. *Select Briefing* team: Janusz Bugajski, Director; Ilona Teleki, Fellow; Milena Staneva, Research Assistant and Editor of *Select Briefing*; Eszter Pall; Jane Sklenar; Dragomira Zhecheva; and Jonathan Zuk.

© 2005 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.