

What We Do Best

Society – Economy – Politics

Round Table opened by - and dedicated to:
Prof. Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament.

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The current unprecedented global challenges require novel approaches and broad co-operation. We must cover new ground in human creativity and find innovative solutions. Focused use of endogenous potential is critical to strengthen the efforts that are searching for long-term global solutions.

1. RETHINK

In order to address the current global crisis, restore economic growth and enhance job-creation potential, contemporary thinking on economic development and prosperity has to be re-examined. Striving to be the "most competitive" as a nation or region is absolutist and conflict seeking.

Competitiveness is necessary – and requires a "level playing field" to be equitable. However, competitiveness as the sole or main driver for progress has failed to provide solutions for humanity. **Competition is not an end in itself.**

The current focus on "Global Competitiveness" is giving negative impetus to Globalisation. It will deviate us from ensuring sustainable growth and prosperity for all mankind.

2. REFOCUS

A Globalised world should ensure sustainable prosperity through peaceful co-existence, tolerance and co-operation. Complementarity in high-tech products and services, and diversity in endogenous potentials at regional, national and local level help to better serve the varying needs of people in a Globalised world.

The diversity of regional, national and local endogenous richness and uniqueness (eg: quality food, quality services, quality tourism, leisure industry, etc.) should be drawn-on as competitive advantages and vehicles for even-handed co-operation. Such determination would also be beneficial for currently declining low-tech- and agricultural regions.

It is necessary to adapt the current drive for "competitiveness" to one for "complementarity and competitive advantage". The latter thrive on diversity and co-operation, while simultaneously allowing equitable and open competition.

3. REBUILD

Regional, national and local endogenous richness and uniqueness offer considerable competitive advantages. These are necessary components of any global solution.

To adapt economies to a globalised environment, governments need to recognise the value of complementarity and relative competitive advantage – alongside standardised measures of global competitiveness. Stakeholders including political leaders and business have to play a more active role in identifying complementarities and competitive advantages.

Full use must be made of endogenous potential to promote prosperity – through new approaches and efficient business networks within and beyond national borders as well as formulating related policy advice.

Competitive advantages and complementarities must be identified at regional, national and local level. Where needed appropriate mechanisms must be established for this purpose.

Stakeholders, including political leaders and business, must pay more attention to possible "competitive advantages and complementarities". To this end, formal non-political advisory bodies should be established with the active involvement of business.

These bodies should interact with their global counterparts in a yet to be established:

Global Competitive Advantage and Prosperity Forum.

– MORE REALISM – LESS ILLUSION –

Global issues need to be addressed in a meaningful global dialogue. All parties should have equal opportunity to initiate, participate and put forward opinions in such a dialogue.

In order for such a dialogue to be successful, two critical issues must be examined:

- are the priorities of the various stakeholders complementary or conflicting in the current global crises?
- how could current dialogue between political leaders, business, scientists and civil society become more democratic, efficient and responsive?

Grandiose plans, high-flying declarations from top political meeting¹ and international scientific conferences are admirable and can be useful. But in isolation they are insufficient and create false hopes and expectations - in the worst-case, confusion and lead to no further action.

In 1961 the then Soviet Union announced their plan to surpass the United States in per capita production within twenty years. Thirty years later the Soviet Union dissolved itself.

In 1992 the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the subsequent 1997 Kyoto Protocol were appropriate steps to raise awareness about the severity of global climate change. But alone they are not the solution. They represent too little, too late and will not solve the problem alone.

In 2000 EU political leaders adopted a strategic goal to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by the year 2010. Almost ten years later the initial objectives appear more illusory than ever.

Currently there is a global pressing need². The human race is facing unprecedented global challenges and transformations due to natural causes and man-made factors. Climatic changes, energy shortages, food- and water scarcity, new diseases, and emerging social unrest are major warning signs that humankind might be on the verge of irreversible decline. This happens while the world population continues to increase and the demography many places in the world are in transformation.

This development has potentially dramatic consequences for the future of humanity - not only in the long-term, but also for the immediate future of our own generation. In order to be able to stop the trend, the contemporary philosophy of development and our way of life have to be re-examined. It also necessitates more understanding, greater tolerance and solidarity, as well as urgent action.

The challenges require new groundbreaking in human creativity and “out-of-box” thinking: holistic ideas, interdisciplinary and novel scientific approaches, development of new technologies and innovative solutions, as well as greater political realism. Making better use of unexploited endogenous potentials is an important element in this effort.

No single region or country, or single group of politicians, business or scientists is able to address this complex issue in isolation.

The issues are too complex and their solutions too expensive for any region or country to handle alone regardless of its size and might. Politicians alone are incapable to address the issues adequately, they are often scientifically ignorant and their mandate has a limited duration. Business is usually short sighted and search for short-term reward. In turn, scientists often possess a certain degree of political naivety and are ready to ignore constraints that are dictated by political- and other realities.

Active involvement of Civil Society is critical in the search for long-term global solutions. All main actors must be part of any global effort. In addition, more focused use of endogenous potentials offered by regional, national and local uniqueness (eg: quality food, quality services, quality tourism, leisure industry, etc.) is critical to strengthen the effort to search for long-term global solutions. Such a comprehensive approach would promote fair competition and offer more possibilities for co-operation – thus mobilise more resources. It can also be expected that a comprehensive approach would lead to greater social conciseness and responsibility by all parties, as well as shared democratic accountability.

Solutions must be ethical, realistic and benefit all mankind – not only certain countries. The focus must consequently be on the long-term, avoiding pure short-term fixes.

¹ *Open letter to Prof. Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament, and Mr. José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, by the Central- and Eastern European Network, 25 September 2009.*

² *Universal Declaration, issued at the international conference Role of National Academies in the 21st Century, 11 October 2008, Podgorica.*

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