



Václav Havel European Dialogues
2nd Prague Conference
Time for European Politics
Prague, 29–30 May 2015



The **Vaclav Havel European Dialogues** are built around the crucial question – about the „power of the powerless” in today’s Europe. In that context, the **Annual Prague Conference** on May 29-30, 2015 will highlight two themes: Europe’s relationship with its neighbours, tensions inside the EU due to immigration and the political process which leads to Europe’s decisions at home as well as abroad. There will be two special events. First, the “Vaclav Havel Lecture” on Friday evening, given by Vaclav Havel’s old friend, the well-known Polish dissident, public intellectual and journalist *Adam Michnik*. Second, on Saturday morning, *Jiri Priban* from Cardiff will lead conversation with European Dialogue between a leading representative of the European Parliament and the Commissioner *Vera Jourova*.

To approach the first theme from a citizens’ angle, we are inviting a panel of speakers from Kiev, Chisinau, Tbilisi and Sarajevo. Our guests, hosted by *Andrew Wilson* will discuss questions which should have been asked a long time ago and in time, before the Maidan erupted in Kiev: how is the EU seen by our neighbours East, Southeast and South? What do they expect from Europe? What do they want to achieve?

The return of geopolitics to Europe from the East together with the publics’ reaction to the spectre of immigration, has finally dawned on EU’s politicians. Europe’s identity is being questioned with unexpected intensity and sometimes in awkward ways. New East-West political and cultural alliances have appeared, fed by nationalism, populist radicalism and Eurasian-style, antiliberal conservatism. Meanwhile, an attitude of disengagement towards “those faraway countries” in the East and in the South, or worse, signs of appeasement seem to be re-awakening too. *Gilles Kepel* will give a presentation and *Jacques Rupnik* will host panelists from Madrid, Rome, Athens and Amsterdam to discuss what defines EU’s own attitude towards countries outside its frontiers and to immigrants and citizens inside. Is it trade, economic interests, security, law or moral values? Can Europe still define its own ways or has it lost the initiative to others? Answers are needed from Europe’s politicians as well as from European civil society: what should it do, what can it do and what it can’t do abroad. *Jan Machacek* will be chairing the panel on European values. We are inviting *Petr Pithart, Pavel Barsa, Ian Traynor and Moritz Hartmann*.

The second theme of the conference concerns the citizens’ chances to enter EU’s political process. It is time for that to turn into genuinely European politics. The difficulty of translating social conflicts into something other than the identity politics of euro scepticism and nationalism reflects a deeper problem affecting European democracies

today: their decreasing capacity to make political choices over their macroeconomic policies. What are then the means and ways of political mobilisation (and legitimacy)? The European Parliament? National parliaments? Direct democracy? Civil society? How to switch from the habit of “nation versus nation” – or “nation versus Brussels” to representations of conflicting social interests? Policy alternatives need to be articulated in a party-political context as a clear choice for European voters. “Talking to Brussels” will be a conversation between representatives of the European Parliament and the Commission and *Jiri Priban*. The conversation will open question of European civil society and activism in an environment of populism as well as the decline of traditional parties. Participants in the final discussion, led by *Paul Flather* from Oxford, will be *Tony Curzon Price*, London, *Gyorgy Petocz*, *Jiri Pehe*, *Camino Mortera-Martinez*, *Sofia Vasilopoulou* and *Marta Simeckova*.

The conference will be attended by journalists from Le Monde, the Guardian, Die Zeit, Open Democracy and the Czech media. After the conference and on its fringes, the Prague Press Club will be organising its own discussion about the success of Putin’s propaganda in European countries. The event is only for invited journalists.