



DAY 2 SUMMARY

Highlights of the day two included the keynote address by A. Wess Mitchell, Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs of the U.S. State Department and the annual “Vision for Europe” Award, which went to European Ombudswoman, Emily O’Reilly.

Dr. Mitchell stressed the shared values that bond Europe, in particular former Czechoslovakia, and the US, declaring that “*Central Europe is Western by history and culture, but most importantly by choice*”. He cautioned against protectionism, and reaffirmed American commitment to European security, but also noted that European allies need to carry their fair share of responsibility for defence.

In the panel *Mapping the EU’s Relationship with the US*, it was acknowledged that EU member states should increase defence spending and should develop strategic autonomy, allowing Europe to be more strategically patient in light of Trump’s policies. Europe should concentrate on pragmatic, unified EU policies rather than bilateral agreements with the US. A session specifically dedicated to European Defence Cooperation emphasized the need for EU defence initiatives to complement NATO. Panelists suggested a change to the principle of unanimous voting, as member states may each have differing defence priorities, thus rendering unanimous consensus impossible.

The topic of defence was also central in the high-level panel on the 2015 Bratislava Roadmap and goals for the 2019 Sibiu Summit. State Secretaries Mr Chmelař and Mr Korčok lauded PESCO as the first step for a common European defence plan, and also highlighted the strategic role of Czechia and Slovakia for intra-EU negotiations. They listed priorities for the upcoming Sibiu Summit, including the Economic and Monetary Union, the MFF, EU foreign policy, and migration – citing mandatory quotas as a hinderance for EU consensus.

The future of the EU Cohesion Policy was explored in another session, wherein participants expressed hope for a more simple, transparent and efficient program. Improvement of communication with EU citizens about the concrete effects of EU funds was presented as a top priority, but panelists disagreed as to whether EU funds should be positioned as transfers or as redistribution for the sake of shared prosperity. The topic of EU funding distribution was expanded in the *PES Study Presentation on the MFF*. The MFF can be interpreted as one of the first attempts at symbiosis between member states, and it demonstrates a shift from rigidity to flexibility. The study supported the use of conditionalities to strategize access to EU funds, but not to punish individual member states.



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Changes in EU governing structures were further explored in a panel on Spitzenkandidate process. Several of the panelists noted a shift of power towards the European Council, and away from the European Commission and European Parliament. They also urged improvement in communication and engagement with national politicians and EU citizens, reiterating the call for transparency, which many panels have touched on throughout the PES.