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TEN YEARS OF CENS

This year CENS will have organized 25 events at CEU, near to 20 have already taken place, the others follow before the end of the year. At all workshops, conferences and lectures I and my colleagues highlight political, economic, legal and other aspects of EU and its neighborhood. Today we would like to make an exception and speak about ourselves, sharing with you some memories and achievements of the 10 years of CENS's activities.

10 years ago, I made two important decisions. First, after the end of my mandate at the European Commission I decided not to look for another job in Brussels, as some of my outgoing colleagues did, but to return to Hungary after more than 12 years of diplomatic service abroad in Copenhagen, Bonn and Berlin and two times in Brussels. I wanted to live in wonderful Budapest and enjoy my vineyard at the Balaton Lake. Second, I accepted the invitation of CEU to come to teach at this University and set up a research center about Europe. Those two decisions determined my life for the following years.

Today, we are commemorating and celebrating with you the first 10 years of CENS. How did we start? In 2005, we were in the first year after the 'big enlargement' of the EU. The new EU of 25 members was surrounded by a crowd of new neighbors, most of them targeting EU accession themselves. My suggestion to CEU was to establish a research center on EU enlargement questions including the lessons and consequences of the 'big enlargement' as well as the prospects, conditions and impacts of potential future enlargements.

This proposal was accepted and the new Center for EU Enlargement Studies – CENS – was opened. I got the possibility of engaging two people as an initial staff of CENS. I was looking for one within CEU and recruited another colleague from the outside. My first staff member from CEU was Anna Reich; later on she followed me to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, when I joined the Bajnai government, afterwards she became a diplomat in New York at the UN Representation of Hungary, she married in New York and sent us a written message for the 10th anniversary of CENS. For the other position I have selected, after a long search, Zselyke Tófalvi. She is here with us today and will introduce herself soon, together with the whole CENS team.

The expanding activities of CENS justified the gradual enlargement of the team. During the 10 years, several people worked in CENS, we are counting today 25 former colleagues; some of them are here as well. In addition, we have had regular visitors, both professors and students, from various countries like Romania, Moldova, Russia, Turkey, Georgia and others. CENS has enjoyed the support of CEU's leadership all the time. Let me take this solemn occasion and express our thanks to the President and Rector John Shattuck, to the Provost Liviu Mattei, to Zsuzsa Gábor from ACRO, to the Head of the IR Department, Matteo Fumagalli and many other departments cooperating with us.

Our research activities have been organized along four main axes: 1) the lessons and consequences of the ‘big enlargement’ with special regard to the experience of the Visegrad 4 countries and Romania, 2) the Western Balkans as the next potential dimension of EU enlargement, 3) Turkey as a long standing candidate and a strategic partner and 4) the eastern neighbors including the EU’s Eastern Partnership program and Russia, another strategic neighbor. We have been very consequent in keeping our interests and actions within those thematic areas.

The main task of our colleagues in CENS, as in any other research center and think tank, is fishing for projects. We have followed a double track approach: applying in consortium for various international projects and proposing our own projects to sponsors. Both have been successful. So far, we have acquired about 500.000 Euros for CEU with about 25 projects from which 10 big international, externally funded projects as main lead.

Our successful applications were, among others:

- *Mapping out Possibilities of V4 Countries in Strengthening the Civil Society Sectors of Serbia and Georgia* (International Visegrad Found project, 2009-2011, total budget 70.000 EUR)
- *The changing world order and its implications for the wider Europe* (OTKA project, 2011-2014, total budget 50.000 EUR, 2 major international conferences, 8 expert workshops, 2 books with 15 authors)
- *“Reclaiming impetus” – Seeking EU-Turkey Convergence in Three Policy Areas* (CENS-Sabancı project, 2011-2014. total budget 36.000 EUR, a book with 11 authors)

We could find external resources to our own projects:

- *Integration Perspectives and Synergic Effects of European Transformation in the Countries Targeted by EU Enlargement and Neighborhood Policies* (OTP, 2007-2009, total budget 88.500 EUR, covering 12 countries: Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Albania, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova; 7 workshops with 15 research institutions)
- *A European Union with 36 members? Perspectives and risks* (OTP, 2011-2014, total budget 30.000 EUR, with 6 partner institutions (FEFA, Belgrade; IPC at Sabanci University, Istanbul; SWP, Berlin; the Global Studies Institute Geneva; EBRD London; SFPA, Bratislava, 7 project conferences and a book with 18 authors)

In addition, we were approached by external partners and asked to work on some topics:

- *Foreign Policy Strategy of Hungary* (MFA, 2007-2008, total budget 50.000 EUR, 10 debates, 6 studies)
- *25 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain* (European Commission, 2014-2015, a book published by the EC)

We wanted to establish a direct link between three kinds of activities: research, teaching at CEU and academic events. We believe we have achieved some result in these areas. Research findings have been directly included in teaching EU enlargement and neighborhood policy and European governance. CEU students have been frequently involved into research projects as co-authors and in various academic events as discussants.

CENS has been known within CEU, in Budapest and in the outside world as an active organizer of conferences, workshops and various lectures. In the first year, 2005 the small core team organized one international conference about the experiences of the 1st year in the

EU. In the following years, the number of events has gradually increased. Altogether we have counted 164 events organized by CENS at CEU.

However, the number of those conferences, workshops and other events where I and my colleagues speak is definitely higher. The members of our team are frequent participants of international events. We want to raise the prestige of CEU and CENS everywhere.

The quantity and the content of our publications were not bad, but they could be better. We have published 5 books and several policy briefs, studies and working papers (45).

We have contributed to render CEU a meeting place for academics, diplomats and journalists in Budapest. Several well-known personalities appeared at our guest lectures: Olli Rehn, Elmar Brok, Ali Babacan, Leonard Orban, Frans Timmermans, Andris Piebalgs, Joschka Fischer, Paavo Lipponen, Karel Schwarzenberg, as well as János Martonyi, Géza Jeszenszky and many others.

My temporary absence from CEU in 2009-2010 when I joined a Hungarian government (for the 3rd time since 1990) as a Foreign Minister, helped to update my personal network.

At our regular ambassadorial lectures representatives of 23 countries took the floor so far. This is an excellent opportunity for CEU students to get first-hand information about actual developments of international relations. Our members have always been open for encountering diplomats, visiting professors and students at CEU or representatives of the press.

As to the future, our main aim is to maintain the actual level and quality of our activities. The content of our events and the orientation of research have changed in the past with new topics and challenges. Today again, we have to reconsider our main targets.

- EU enlargement has slowed down; no new accession is in sight in the near future, even if negotiations with Serbia, Montenegro and Turkey are in course. At the same time, post-accession conditionality and the quality of new democracies are emerging issues in several EU member states that have entered the Union in the last wave.
- The Ukrainian crisis exploded around conflicts of an EU association agreement. We have discussed this question at 12 events at CEU organized by CENS. The EU's Eastern Partnership project covers a vast area of six states which represent a wide scale of post-Soviet consolidation problems of different kinds.
- Turkey is a strategic neighbor of the EU and a key transit point for refugees coming from areas of unrest and warfare and targeting core EU countries as asylum seekers. The unprecedented migration flow of our days has already overloaded the capacities of several transit countries within the EU and in its direct neighborhood, and sets to a serious probe the EU's humanistic integration policy with special regard to Germany.

Even if the original blend of EU Enlargement Studies has changed its color and brightness with time, the political and geographical area where our activities are enrooted is extremely important for world politics. There are challenging new questions to be researched. We are sure that there will be sufficient food for thought for the next 10 years.

CENS still makes sense!