

PRESS RELEASE

Czech visions of European policy outlined at the Brussels' office launch of the EUROPEUM think-tank

Prague/Brussels, 24 May 2016

A leading Czech think-tank, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, has opened its Brussels office in January 2016. During the first five months of its existence, it already hosted a number of successful events, last time the Brussels office official launch, during which Minister of Foreign Affairs Lubomír Zaorálek outlined the Czech vision of European policy.

As the **first Czech think tank**, EUROPEUM has opened its own office in the “European capital”, Brussels. The main motivation was to move closer to the centre of European affairs, to have the opportunity to closely monitor EU policy making and contribute to its shaping. It thus brings Czech visions a little closer to Europe and the European ones to the Czech Republic.

EUROPEUM had the privilege to welcome the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Lubomír Zaorálek. In his key note speech delivered at the **office launch in Brussels on 23 May**, Mr Zaorálek praised the presence of a renowned Czech think-tank at the heart of the Union, given the fact the government cannot act alone articulating the benefits of European integration. *“It is a pioneering enterprise and I hope that the **stronger Czech presence at the source of European decision-making will prove expedient for the level of debate we conduct on European affairs,**”* he added. On European policy, Mr. Zaorálek stated that: *“The **Czech Republic has the ambition to participate in the core policies of the EU, including the third phase of EMU, and is ready to do what it takes to safeguard a functioning Schengen Area. We are well aware of the ever-increasing importance of carefully tailored European action beyond the Union’s borders.**”* and stressed the importance of a Czech presence within the united Europe: *“One thing is certain, however. Before we begin to engage in debates on the future course of the EU, we must do our homework and be clear about our European engagement. It is my firm conviction that **there is no future for Czechia except within a strong, cohesive European Union.** For many reasons a united Europe is where we are at home. Despite the crises we have endured, we should bear in mind that the European Union is part of the solution, not part of the problem.”*

The office launch took place with a high-profile debate on *“Czech EU Policy - Priorities and Expectations”* at the Czech Permanent Representation to the EU. At the exceptionally well attended discussion EUROPEUM hosted Czech MEP **Jan Zahradil** together with **Steven Blockmans**, Head of EU Foreign Policy at Centre for European Policy Studies, a distinguished Brussels think-tank and **Martin Špolc** from European Commission’s Directorate-General for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union

The gist of the agenda of the Brussels office, which is led by Zuzana Picková, consists of organising events focused on the debate about Czech and Central European views on key issues related to EU policy. The office also publishes the **Brussels Monitor** – regular expert scrutiny of current European developments. *“Since the office opened five months ago, we’ve organized four events, strengthening the presence of Czech topics in the European discourse in Brussels,”* noted EUROPEUM’s Brussels head Zuzana Picková.

In the upcoming days, **on 27 May**, a breakfast roundtable will follow, co-hosted by EUROPEUM and CEC Government Relations. The topic of the **roundtable** will be **“Better Regulation Agenda - Better Deal for European Industry and Businesses?”** and it will welcome variety of experts from the European Commission, industry representatives and NGOs. Right after that Brussels office will join the rest of the team and focus on the **first annual Prague European Summit**, international conference with the presence of the prime ministers from the Visegrád countries who will launch a **new initiative** *“V4 Perspective on the Future of Europe”*.

Contact:

Zuzana Picková, *Head of the Brussels office*

+32 485 715 310, zpickova@europeum.org

Filip Hartmann, *Communications manager*

+420 775 153 111, fhartmann@europeum.org