

Exploring the Czech Republic's export system and economic diplomacy

Mr Martin Tlapa, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Non-European Countries, Economic and Development Cooperation, Czech Republic.

The Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence for EU-Australia Economic Cooperation held a Policy Roundtable that brought together members of the European Diplomatic Community, senior economists from the Australian Public Service and academics from the ANU.

The Minister delivered a presentation on several issues, including the changes in the economy and international trade. He focused on the goods and services demanded by the global economy and the contributions that the Czech Republic can make. The challenges of such trade were also discussed with an emphasis on the risks associated with the potential 'close' of export markets. Adding to the value of exports and the share of services is a significant point of interest for the Czech Republic because it is one of the main factors contributing to the economy's growth.

Mr Tlapa expanded on the issue of economic diplomacy. As there have been changes to international trade, an evolution to the kind of diplomacy that has been demanded has followed. The adoption of 'Network Diplomacy' techniques allows the Czech Republic to concentrate on strengthening bilateral flows with state and industry partners. Additionally, Mr Tlapa touched on certain challenges that are associated with economic diplomacy. This includes the evaluation of the performance of Embassies in third countries. To assist this process, a greater focus is pointed towards harnessing the efforts of the *Unified Foreign Network* and strengthening the economic agendas of embassies and building upon the services of specialised economic diplomats. This is in line with the overarching goal of furthering the value of exports and services to grow the Czech economy.

The presentation elicited a keen interest from the roundtable participants, with the discussion centring on three main areas. Firstly, members considered the current issues in the multilateral trading system. The second key point engaged with the methods of evaluation for the performance of academics and the possible application of procedural aspects to the case of economic diplomacy and furthering the Czech Republic's interests abroad. This involved a steady debate over the advantages and disadvantages of case-study analysis and metric analysis. Additionally, the roundtable members exchanged their perspectives on economic diplomacy and the specific strategies that could be employed to enhance public engagement in trade and increase the demand for such a type of service. Lastly, the Czech delegation articulated the priorities of the Czech Republic in the ongoing negotiations for the EU-Australia Free Trade Agreement.

