

"We have brought the EU back on track"

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Economic and financial crisis, disagreement on the climate change issue, institutional insecurity and government crisis in the country holding the Presidency at the time, the Czech Republic. When Sweden took over the Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers in 2009, the challenges were many. Looking back on a hectic autumn, Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt notes that the Swedish Presidency has achieved what it set out to achieve.

"Before we took over, many joked that they were longing for a Swedish Presidency. They expected it to be characterised by order and an ability to drive the process forward. My impression is that we have partly lived up to those expectations", says Fredrik Reinfeldt.
"Unable to process it all yet"

He says that, looking back on the six months in the EU's driving seat, he is pleased. Pleased with "having achieved what we set out to achieve" and with getting policies into place.

He himself has many memories from this autumn. What he found the most enjoyable was the opportunity to participate in the international forums in which Sweden is not normally included, such as the G8 and the G20 meetings. The seven summits with countries outside the EU also stand out, as do the intensive days of negotiations during the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.
"Those days were an incredible experience and gave an insight into both the world's ambitions and the world's flaws. That is one of the things I will take with me. But I have probably not had time to process everything yet. That will probably come when I have had more time for reflection", says Fredrik Reinfeldt.
Crises eliminated

The Presidency priority issues were mostly about crisis management; economic crisis, climate change crisis and crisis in the EU's institutional framework. 3 300 meetings, uncountable telephone calls and a number of trips later, the crises have been eliminated. The EU's financial market has been given a new financial supervisory architecture, the Union has a common mandate on the climate change issue, the Treaty of Lisbon has entered into force and the EU has agreed on two new leaders – a permanent President and a "foreign minister".
"But it has been a great challenge of a kind that you are not always given in life. Suddenly, your ability in entirely new areas is tested and you are not always certain how it is going to end up. It has been a hectic autumn", says Fredrik Reinfeldt.

When asked what has been the most difficult issue to handle, Mr Reinfeldt mentions two things: The

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Treaty of Lisbon and the climate change issue.

"In terms of diplomacy and work, the greatest challenge was the objections against the Lisbon Treaty made by the Czech President. Vaclav Klaus made a last-minute demand which was complicated enough in and by itself but which also created a chain reaction in the neighbouring countries. Some of those witnessing this felt that a hard line had to be taken against him. That made for a lot of things to handle at one and the same time and it could easily have meant a delay. But we succeeded in resolving the issue", Mr Reinfeldt says.

"The global leadership lacks what the EU has"

"The most difficult policy area to manage has been the issue of climate change. For the simple reason that there is a frustrating element in being able to state that science has proved that humans affect the climate and that we basically have both the economic funds and technological ability to do something about it", says Fredrik Reinfeldt.

During the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December, Mr Reinfeldt led the EU in the negotiations. Earlier in the autumn, the EU heads of state and government were agreed on a joint mandate on the climate change issue, but at the UN conference, the world could not reach an agreement.

"And that is due to the fact that the global political leadership lacks what the EU has: a well-oiled decision-making machine. Also, too many do not take responsibility", says Mr Reinfeldt and continues:

"Given how much I have worked on this, and how much the democracies pushed for an agreement in Copenhagen, because that was mainly what happened, some progress has been made. The documents we produced does provide a structure for how to resolve this, but the numbers and ambitions are not high enough."

You can find a summary of the Swedish EU Presidency's achievements [HERE](#).