

Interview with former Swedish Ambassador Christer Persson



On October 21, 2015, former Swedish Ambassador to various Latin American countries including Uruguay and Nicaragua visited FIU to give a lecture on 'Swedish Domestic Politics: past & present'. Mr. Persson was able to integrate his experience of his many years as diplomat representing Sweden in Latin America, at the United Nations in Vienna, the EU in Brussels, and other posts. Given his illustrious background, the JMCE asked him a few questions on current topics in EU, European and Swedish politics. But first, we wanted to know a bit about his current position: based out of Wasilla, Alaska, he is an affiliate of the Department of Political Science of the University of Alaska, Anchorage. But he also lectures regularly for Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. In addition, in the past years after retiring from his diplomatic position, he taught at several universities international relations and law, as well as European and Latin American Politics in Nicaragua, Chile and at the UN-mandated University of Peace in Costa Rica.

When asked what the former Ambassador sees as the most pressing political issue in Swedish Politics, he cited the ongoing refugee/migrant crisis: not only because it is a huge challenge for a relatively small country such as Sweden to host and integrate thousands of arriving people, but also because a failure to do so would strengthen the emerging far-right Swedish Democrats, with unforeseen consequences for Swedish domestic and indeed, European/EU Politics. When asked about his view of the biggest political issue in the EU currently, Amb. Persson mentioned the Eurocrisis. Far from being over, the long-term sustainability of the Greek governmental budget and Greece's economic performance is still not guaranteed. And while Sweden, as a non-Euro member, did not have an obligation to provide funds, it did so out of solidarity. Our final question was directed at the issue of leadership in the EU, which is faced with a number of challenges at the moment. Ambassador Persson expressed that the Franco-German leadership was essential in developing and furthering European integration. Thus, he does not agree to the ones who think that right now may be a good time to abolish the EU (as the EU often took a step forward and then back), nor does he view the current German dominance in EU affairs a problem, as long as Germany pursues responsible policies- which by judging at past statesmen and their leadership, was the case.

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