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## **AN AMBITIOUS VISION FOR THE ENLARGED EUROPE**

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At the end of the Nice summit in December 2000, the heads of State and government of the 15 EU Member States gave themselves and European citizens two years to discuss the future of Europe. One year later, at Laeken, the final declaration opened up broad avenues for the debate the Convention is to undertake. The questions the Convention will have to resolve are very real ones. They deserve a serious, reasoned and, I hope, innovative response. Nevertheless, in my opinion, the first step in this debate – which must serve as a basis for the future proposals – remains the question "what do we want to do together?". Our ideal must be the absolutely inescapable, unavoidable project of reunifying Europe. We need look no further for the next ten years. That project is within our reach, it is functional and I hope that, some day, historians will cite it as a model.

### **Three essential goals for a project within our reach**

The project is within our reach, on condition that we focus very precisely on what we want to do together. I feel we may have three common ambitions for a Union of 27, 30 or 32 European countries: an area of active peace, a framework for sustainable development, and a distinctive way of managing and enhancing our cultural and ethical diversity.

Building an area of peace brings us back to the basic foundations of the initial European project. Europe was built to say no to conflict, no to the wars that repeatedly tore the continent apart.

But I am keen to add the qualifier "active", to remind the generations, who were born after the last World War, who did not take part in the struggles of movements such as Solidarnosc, and were spared by the Balkan conflicts, that life is not all sweetness and light. We must never cease to safeguard ourselves, by consolidating peace and by promoting democracy.

Active peace is not the "peace of cemeteries" we experienced during the Cold War. We must not forget that we west Europeans found ourselves on the right side of the line drawn by the Yalta agreement and that our east European relatives were less fortunate. I consider we have a debt towards them from a historical point of view. Not in terms of negotiating the body of Community law, but in terms of history. At the same time, we are overjoyed at seeing the whole family brought together. Active peace builds on the spirit of mutual understanding among peoples which – I think it is fair to say – the six, then nine, then 10, then 12 Member States created and fostered. Caution prevents me from saying "15", but there can be no doubt that the 12 Member States arrived at a form of mutual understanding which went far beyond practical achievements such as the single market, the single currency and the freedom for young people to move around the Union as they please.

The objective is even more significant for the countries of eastern Europe, most of which are geographically small. The Czech writer Milan Kundera once said: "What is a small country? A country that can never take either its future or its borders for granted." And there is no denying that the central and eastern European countries, more still than the current Member States, have had their borders moved against their will by treaties and by the major powers.

Nor is peace secured merely with the signature of a formal act. Preserving peace is an ongoing effort and there is no shortage of sites to work on. The Balkans are the most prominent among them. I welcome the fact that the only truly important idea has finally been expressed in Zagreb. "First engage in cooperation and reconciliation as far as possible; do not forget the past yet demonstrate that you can live together. Then only will you join the extended European family." This message had never before been put across so clearly and I am glad that this has now been done. I think the practical follow-up should be monitored – not an easy task in view of what is happening in Kosovo, or even of the outcome of the Bosnian elections.

If the European Union could contribute to bringing peace back to the Balkans and could ensure secure borders and peaceful coexistence and cooperation for that area's population, that would be a historical achievement comparable to that of the 1950s. We must therefore work towards that area of active peace, without underestimating the constraints and requirements involved.

Secondly, we must establish a framework for the sustainable development of all our countries. This is where we come up against an issue which many Europeans are justifiably worried about. Will tomorrow's Europe continue to be governed and inspired by the rule of economic and social cohesion defined in the 1987 Single European Act? I will briefly repeat what we had in mind when we created this rule: economic and social Europe relies on competition that stimulates, cooperation that reinforces and solidarity that unites. Cooperation is as important as competition. A lot remains to be done in the fields of research, technology, transport and the environment. As for solidarity, it stems from the structural policies implemented in a number of "packages". These policies could come under threat in an enlarged Europe, for it would appear that the necessary transfers are deemed too costly by the Union's richest members and the current beneficiary countries. I am nevertheless sure that without these structural policies, the basic cement of Europe would not be as strong. Citizens in rural areas and inner-city districts would have no tangible experience of Europe. The policies must be pursued. However, for that to be possible, the enlarged 30-member Union must be given a budget to match its size and projects. Competition, cooperation and solidarity are, in my view, the main criteria for judging whether tomorrow's enlarged Europe will remain true to its initial purpose. That is the daunting challenge now facing the 15 Member States.

Lastly, the third goal for the enlarged Europe would be to enhance our spiritual and cultural diversity. That is the most difficult aim to achieve and the very essence of a mobilising project: building an area of values experienced through diversity. The tragedy which struck the United States has shown just how topical this issue is. We must try to understand each other and repress the idea – which we will never totally free ourselves of – that man is a wolf to other men. We must endeavour to understand others, their religions, their ways of doing things, their customs. And we must learn to live with them.

Of course, over the last decade, considerable efforts have been made in the applicant countries and democracy has progressed in eastern Europe. But democracy is losing vitality in western Europe and our countries are hardly offering striking examples of clear-sighted and active citizen participation at this point in time. In our democracies, each and every one of us needs to be regarded as a member of the Community. In this connection, one of the sensitive issues facing the enlarged Europe is precisely the status of minorities. We must demonstrate our ability to resolve the case of traveller communities and of many other minorities. How can we expect to exert an influence in other parts of the world if we are not ourselves capable of regarding every member of our societies as worthy of being treated as a person, on equal terms with everyone else?

Another difficult topic is the fight against international crime, whose turnover exceeds the gross national product of many of our States. Of course, we cannot do everything overnight, nor can we necessarily do everything at European level. Nevertheless, if we were able just to take steps against international crime in an enlarged Union, I believe our citizens would be extremely grateful. It is my firm belief that our interior, justice and finance ministers should deal with the issue as a matter of priority.

Lastly, I would like to sound a note of caution on one point. If we want to enable Europeans to unite, we must not attempt to cover up the past. We must bear in mind the wars, conflicts and horrors we have endured. We must seek to achieve not merely superficial unity but a culture that incorporates all of our past. I think this will strike a chord with the applicant countries, at a time when attempts are being made to erase some aspects of the past from our history books. I feel it is necessary because we must rediscover our condition as human beings, who are able to acknowledge that certain deeds in their lives and in the lives of their nations have been less honourable than others. I also believe we should listen to one another. In this respect, I am somewhat critical not of the Commission – which is doing all it can – but of the heads of State and government who rushed to announce the enlargement without listening to the applicants. They have not listened to what the Baltic States within the USSR, the eastern European countries within Comecon and Bulgaria and Romania alongside the Balkans had to endure under Soviet rule. We must listen, in order to develop a cultural heritage that can enrich us and increase our resolve to do better tomorrow than we did yesterday. Someone who springs to mind in this connection is Vaclav Havel: not only is he a man who can listen, but he is also the bearer of the true values of Europe that he calls "the true spirituality of Europe". In this respect, I regret that the authors of the European charter of fundamental rights should have bowed to a few backward opinions and removed all references to religious heritage. Our cultural values are our best safeguard against imposed homogeneity. Rather than complain about the threat of uniformity presented by globalisation, we must take control of our lives, accept our diversity and set new foundations for European humanism.

If Europe manages to do this by 2010, it will be remembered as a major achievement. But it cannot do so without the necessary commitment and resources.

#### A functional project

The project is therefore within our reach. It is also functional. Once we have set the objectives I have just put forward for discussion, if we can avoid the pitfall of repeated announcements with their demagogical undertones, we will just need to meet three imperatives to make this enlarged Europe come true.

The first is to overcome the numerical obstacles. Without wishing to be humorous, for that would not be appropriate under the current circumstances, we need only think about how Council meetings take place today. When a round table discussion is held, fifteen ministers speak in turn after the Commission representative. As a result, after a couple of hours, a representative of one of the larger countries loses patience and goes down to speak to the press. This perturbs one of the others, who does the same. The remainder do not get a proper hearing and by the time the meeting ends, many ministers have left. Imagine what would happen with 27 or 30 members... The working procedures must be changed. This may not be a spectacular measure. It is neither a new constitution nor a historical endeavour, but it is nonetheless an indispensable reform. It is vital that when ministers meet, they should be told: "Your representatives have made progress but three questions remain to be decided. Say yes or no to each of them. One of you will then speak in support of a yes vote, and another in support of the no vote. Anyone who believes that the vital interests of their country are at

stake will also be allowed to take the floor." The approach may seem mundane, yet it is a necessary precondition.

Secondly, there is a very real need for greater simplicity and openness. Projects must be prioritised and the General Affairs Council must be enabled to draw up the political agenda with the Commission, to ensure that the Union's action is clear and transparent. Today, when the Commission submits a proposal to the Council of Ministers, the paper is caught up in a complex web of procedures involving a number of experts and special advisers, and re-emerges only two or three years later. How can the general public possibly understand what is going on?

Finally, I would repeat that the Community method will be all the more necessary with 27 rather than 12 or 15 Member States. However, the method needs to be reviewed. The Commission will have to try to concentrate on what is essential and issue proposals on the really vital issues, and the General Affairs Council, meeting every fortnight in Brussels, will need to clarify things at regular intervals and work hand in hand with the European Parliament while also allowing the national parliaments and citizens to fulfil their respective duties.

These three reforms may not make institutional history but are, in my opinion, essential preconditions for ensuring the smooth running of the enlarged Europe.

#### A model project

We therefore have before us a project that is within sight, that is functional – leaving aside the major institutional questions – and, lastly, that can serve as a model. First of all, as we enlarge to the east we must strengthen our relations with the south. Europe has two main neighbours, in addition to the United States across the Atlantic: Russia and its neighbours to the east and the Mediterranean region to the south. Formerly the cradle of civilisations, the latter area is now subject to severe strain, not only between Israel and Palestine, but also in North Africa. Europe's Mediterranean policy is therefore crucial. We must not, because our attention is focused on making a success of enlargement – and the very difficult technical negotiations this involves –, forget the south. I know this is not easy, because the Mediterranean countries themselves are not naturally inclined to cooperate with one another. Nevertheless, it is absolutely vital to the future of this large area stretching from Ireland to the Middle East. I am sure we can all understand that we should not neglect the south. Likewise, we Europeans have close cultural links with Latin America. Yet very often, because we are unwilling to buy a few extra bananas or kilos of meat, we spoil this special historic and cultural relationship in spite of the fact that Europe needs it to exist – not to expand its sphere of influence but merely to exist.

The second important and unsettled issue which will make this a model project is that of the Union's new borders. If tomorrow, with 27 Member States, because it is necessary to ensure the safety of our population, we move our current borders to the borders of the new Member States and make the neighbouring populations feel that it has become more difficult than before to visit us for tourist or business purposes, we will have missed our objective and squandered an exceptional opportunity. It is technically very difficult, but politically vital, to put across a message of peace and openness. That is why the security-immigration-asylum triptych is a central concern for the Union. We must view immigration as a part of our future. The history of peoples has always been shaped by migration. There is no reason for that to change. Can we be generous and serious, pragmatic, protective of our vital interests yet open at the same time? Can we take account of global developments while also further increasing our citizens' security? That is undoubtedly a tremendous challenge, which I look upon with

great humility. Yet I must point it out as an essential factor which will make or break the success and influence of Europe.

Lastly, if we accept the three goals I put forward for an enlarged Europe, that will mean that, within this community of 500 million people, we will have managed to reconcile the four freedoms – free movement of persons, goods, services and capital – and a market economy with the necessary regulation. Some may have forgotten about this regulation, but economic events over the last two years have forcefully put it back on the agenda. It is up to Europe to show that the immediate imperatives of economic profitability can be reconciled with preparing for the future. That is an approach which is in line with its model of balance between society and the individual. The Union must demonstrate that it is possible to reap the benefits of a market economy while applying minimum rules to offset its failings, short-termism and neglect of public services, public goods, social justice and the environment. For freedom without rules is anarchy, the triumph of the strong over the weak... and unpredictability. This balance that each of the Union's Member States has been able to achieve is known as the "welfare society". It is a model we must now invoke, balance, apply – and of course adapt – at European level. If the enlarged Europe is able to demonstrate by 2010 or 2020 that it can be a prototype for globalisation, it will probably give others ideas on how to improve the way globalisation is being conducted. It may also pave the way for a review of the Bretton Woods system which gave birth to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and of the Havana agreements which led to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. We need a fresh outlook on the world. As the builders of this entity of 500 million inhabitants, we have it within our grasp to put forward a successful model, even if it is not the only one. It is Europe's role to do this, on account of its traditions and philosophical beliefs.

That is the ambitious yet pragmatic vision one might put forward for an enlarged Europe. To use concepts that will be familiar to some, it is more than a European area but less than a European power. If the enlarged Europe can achieve this vision, historians would say that we have contributed to rebuilding a world order. That order may not be ideal or perfect, for there can be no perfection in such matters, but it would show a greater concern for ensuring equal opportunities for all people and combating hunger, the ills related to lack of healthcare and inequalities in access to education. Such is the genuine new frontier of the enlarged Europe. May it reach that frontier and present to the world a model which will make us proud for those who will have to shoulder the same task in the future.