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The Future of the European Integration Process: Ideas and Concepts of Candidate Countries

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Boris Hajoš

The Case of Croatia

I want to enrich the debate on the future of European integration process with a Croatian point of view. I would also like to present an overview of Croatia's position on the prospects for future relations with the EU, as well as its role in the region, sometimes called Western Balkans, sometimes Southeastern Europe. I would like to use this opportunity to inform you about the progress and achievements made by the Republic of Croatia in the context of signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement.

In 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, there was an euphoria of solidarity from the West to the old East. In the next decade, time was spent on utilizing instruments at hand for the preparation for future membership. The crucial milestone happened after the Washington Summit in 1999 when Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary became members of NATO. This is a turning point in the whole process of European enlargement, a guarantee of its irreversibility and inevitability. Now, the process of enlargement is perceived in a sober way, going step-by-step, too slow with a strong political and economic conditionality. However, we must make sure and insist that, notwithstanding the results of the 2004 Intergovernmental Conference, the Southeastern European countries are true partners and an integral part of the future unified Europe.

For Croatia debates that address the future of Europe are of utmost importance since we strongly believe that a united Europe without its Southeastern part is not a complete one. As for the dynamics of the present enlargement, the key date in recent times is the Goteborg European Council conclusions, which state that the next enlargement will enable new candidates to take part in the next European Parliament elections, scheduled for

June 2004. Regarding the method of the enlargement process, there are two main approaches: one that predicts a “big bang“, or the accession of most candidate countries at the same time, and the other that supports gradual accession of different groups of individual countries. In any case, we are of the opinion that the principle of evaluating individual merits of each country must be maintained.

The Treaty of Nice has not responded to all of the major expectations that were raised during its preparation. Having in mind the practical reforms that the Union needs, the adoption of the treaty showed how hard it is to change the institutional setup of the EU. However, it provided the basis for the European Union to continue to function with its enlarged membership. The candidate countries were given a road map and a distribution of votes in the Council and a number of seats in the European Parliament were made to accommodate the new members.

The fact that the future position of our region within the EU and Croatia's position were not discussed in Nice gives us only more motives to follow developments in the EU better in order to secure our position in a united Europe. Therefore, we are very much interested that after the 5th enlargement the future enlargements of the EU do not stop. We would like to see the doors of the future membership open and we do expect equal footing in future negotiations for membership within the EU.

Although there were no concrete discussions and plans for a Europe consisting also of countries of Southeastern Europe at Nice, allow me at this point to just briefly present the expectations of the EU membership from the Croatian point of view. If we, for example, take into account the size of Croatia, once we enter the Union we will probably amount to less than 1% of its total population. In accordance with the Nice Treaty and if the institutional mathematics remains the same, we would be entitled to have 12 or 13 members of the European Parliament, seven votes in the Council, and, at least in the first period, no members of the Commission.

Since this meeting is dealing with the future of integration process in the EU, the security aspect of the process should not be sidelined from our agenda. With regard to the increasing danger of the scourge of international

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terrorism, Europe will have to try harder to strengthen its security. In two ways: within the framework of a Common Foreign and Security Policy, and also through enhanced military cooperation within the NATO, in order to promote solidarity and adequately contribute to the global anti-terrorist coalition.

The new realities that characterize the world today clearly show that various forms of integration are taking place in order to ensure a more stable and prosperous political and economic environment. The enlarged Europe of the future will draw its strength from its unity and the size of the common market, but also from the respect for cultural and other differences of individual peoples. The success of this process in Southeastern Europe depends both on the readiness of the countries in the region to undertake fundamental reforms, as well as on the change of perceptions in the Union towards the belief that every European country must be offered the same opportunity to join.

That is a key for understanding the whole process. We have always to keep in mind that integration is a two-way street. It is equally valuable to be an aspirant for membership, as it is to be the one granting admission. The synergy that is created in the accession process allows the existing members as well as the future members to be mutually more complete and more enriched by the enlargement.

The Croatian government is aware that the enlargement of the EU is neither an easy process nor a fast one. Croatia is for various reasons a latecomer to the process of EU enlargement. This very fact entails its own shortcomings, but also some advantages. The most important advantage is that we are able to learn from the experiences of the candidate countries. As for many other countries, it is in Croatia's interest to embark upon a path that will, through a series of carefully planned and well-performed measures, confirm that it is recognized as a true member of the European and world community, firmly embedded in the spirit of cooperation, and certain of its rights and obligations to that very community.

In the period after the last year's elections, the Croatian government has devoted special attention to its role as a reliable partner to its neighbors and

to all other countries it cultivates ties of cooperation with. Its foremost foreign policy goals have concentrated on forging closer ties with its partners, and on ensuring that processes of both political and economic integration proceed unimpeded. Croatia has been admitted to the World Trade Organization, has continued with negotiations for concluding bilateral free trade agreements with EFTA and CEFTA countries, planning to become a CEFTA member, and has stepped up its efforts to enter into contractual relations with the European Union.

The relations between the Republic of Croatia and the European Union have taken an upturn. This year we saw a turning point in the development of Croatia's relations with the EU. It began with intense negotiations with the European Commission in connection with the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA). The negotiations were successfully concluded in the very short time of only five months. The Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union was initiated in May 2001 and signed in October 2001 in Luxembourg. This is the first bilateral agreement ever concluded between the EU and Croatia. The significance of this agreement establishing legal and contractual relations with the EU is so much bigger since it is not only the first formal step in institutionalizing the relations with the EU, but also marks the beginning of preparations of Croatia for EU membership, which is our priority political goal.

The Stabilization and Association Agreement is a new type of association agreement, which has two major differences from the Europe Agreements: it contains the stabilization element and the title on regional co-operation. This is understandable, taking into account the need to attain and maintain both political and economic stability in the sometimes tragically volatile region of Southeastern Europe. The Agreement defines the relationship between Croatia and the EU in all three pillars of the EU – the European Community and its economic aspects, the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and Justice and Home Affairs area. The adjustments that the Agreement requires from Croatia are meeting the Copenhagen criteria, legal harmonization and readiness to contribute to regional cooperation and stability.

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The importance of this first agreement, which establishes contractual relations between Croatia and the EU, is still impossible to assess. The SAA is not only the first formal step in the establishment of Croatia's relations with the EU, but it also marks the beginning of comprehensive reforms and preparations of the Republic of Croatia for its full membership in the EU. Moreover, the SAA gives us a development and progress perspective, which will have a significant impact on all aspects of life in our country.

Let me point out what is on the Croatian schedule for the near future. Croatia is first and foremost facing an extensive activity in the field of harmonization of Croatian legislation with that of the EU. According to the stipulations of the SAA, the priority areas of harmonization are the following: freedom of market competition, state subsidies, intellectual, industrial and commercial property rights, public procurement, standardization and metrology, and consumer protection. Additionally, an agreement has been reached on the obligations of Croatia to simplify and make more transparent the procedure for acquiring real estate in Croatia for the citizens of the EU member states. The SAA envisages for the Republic of Croatia to gradually harmonize the regulations from the above areas with the corresponding EU regulations. The transitional periods for the harmonization of the Croatian legislation will last between three and five years, depending on the area. The total transitional period for acquiring a complete level of compliance required for associate membership of Croatia shall last at maximum six years.

Croatia also needs to work on the fulfillment of the issues highlighted by the political part of the agreement, notably the regional cooperation component. Within the scope of the agreement this means a readiness to conclude bilateral conventions with the countries included in the Stabilization and Association Process, but also with candidates for EU accession. These conventions will be primarily aimed at strengthening bilateral economic relations and mutual free trade, but will be devoid of any pressure to enter into any kind of multilateral or new state-building associations in this region.

Croatia is and will remain determined and committed to substantially contribute to the development of regional co-operation and to the stabilization of the region. This is not only our formal obligation stemming from the Stabilization and Association Agreement, but it is also a priority in the foreign policy of the Croatian government. Croatia needs an economically and politically stable neighborhood to the same extent as the EU needs it. This is why there should be no doubt about the future regional intentions and actions of Croatia in Southeastern Europe.

Let me just briefly focus on the trade aspects of current and future economic relations in the region. In our view, a strategic commitment to develop regional cooperation can best be highlighted in the area of trade policy by pursuing regional trade arrangements promoted and supported by the Stability Pact in the Memorandum of Understanding on the Liberalization and Facilitation of Trade. Croatia has signed the Memorandum together with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Macedonia and Romania.

It confirms Croatia's commitment to develop and implement the network of bilateral agreements on free trade of goods by the end of 2002, which would be in line with the rules and discipline of the WTO, as well as with the relations established by the countries of the region with the EU. By agreeing to create such a free-trade environment in the southeast of Europe, Croatia has sent a clear message that we stand ready to cooperate with all countries in the region and contribute to the reconstruction of their economies by rebuilding and reinforcing trade relations in the region.

We have, however, often been invited to take a step beyond a network of bilateral agreements on free trade and proposed to participate in creating a common economic space or customs union in the Balkans. It is too ambitious by any standards and therefore it is a highly unrealistic project. Croatia does not see any economic or political reasons to support this idea. One has definitely to draw a line between efficient and inefficient solutions, between ambitions and reality, between regional cooperation and attempts to create new state-related associations in the Balkans. For us, this line goes straight between a network of bilateral free trade agreements on the one

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hand, and the customs union on the other. The customs union is an unacceptable solution to Croatia.

Everything the customs union could offer to companies and countries from the economic and trade-related point of view is equally achievable through a network of bilateral agreements on free trade. Even establishing such a network of bilateral agreements on free trade is an extremely complex affair. This leads us to the conclusion that it is much more productive and realistic to contemplate how the economies of Southeastern Europe can become integrated to a much larger extent and at a faster pace with the united economies, legislation, standards and criteria of the European Union, than to try figure out how to realize a Balkan-oriented economic self-sufficiency.

An evolvement of bilateral free trade agreements into a single, multilateral agreement on a free trade area may contribute to that goal, especially if all countries of Southeastern Europe could become CEFTA members at an accelerated pace. In that case they should extend credible assurances that rules of origin system can function free of abuse on this multilateral level, and confirm their readiness to carry out liberalized, transparent and predictable trade policies by joining the World Trade Organization. This proposal could also contribute to keeping long-term prospects of CEFTA, by shifting its membership to a southeast geographical direction at the time when most of the present day members would become EU member states.

In this respect, it must be noted that there is still a great difference in the development of various Southeastern European countries. While Croatia has approximately 4500 USD GDP per capita, other countries range between 800 and 1400 USD. However, we have already shown that we are ready for regional economic cooperation, particularly in liberalizing trade within the region. To this end, we have signed the Free Trade Agreements with Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Hungary, Poland, EFTA countries, as well as a Memorandum of Understanding on trade liberalization and facilitation in SEE, in which the seven countries of SEE agreed to create a network of FTAs by end of 2002. Also, Croatia will soon become a member of CEFTA.

Although with the fall of Milosevic the security situation in the region has significantly improved, problems, such as in Macedonia, continued even without him. We hope and expect the implementation of the Framework Agreement, which will lead to full normalization in Macedonia. We look forward to the efforts of the new Albanian government in making visible and continuous progress in its institutional and economic development. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the situation is still complex; with the Dayton structure constantly showing its ups and downs, but the new coalition government "Alliance" must be supported. In the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, there are fundamental questions of the constitutional arrangements as well as on the status of Montenegro, Kosovo and even Vojvodina. Given such a varying situation in these countries, it requires a tailor-made approach by the EU.

Another important aspect to the integration process will surely be the impact of the Euro. In this field, the region is maybe closer to the EU than in political terms. In Bosnia and Herzegovina convertible mark is already a legal currency. The Euro will be directly introduced in Kosovo, and perhaps in Montenegro. At our northern borders, Hungary and Slovenia are doing their best to enter the EMU. The Euro may prove to be an important cohesive element to bridge the gap between the rich West and the poor South.

Only after the signing of the agreement does the real work begin on the implementation of both what has been agreed to and to work on other conditions for full-fledged EU membership. Crucial for our further relations with the EU is the implementation of the commitments that ensue from the agreement. More importantly, the SAA is a starting point for a gradual but ever-deeper and infinite Europeanization of Croatia. The SAA is not a longer-term alternative to the EU membership. It is a stepping-stone for membership, and is only perceived as such in Croatia. It is our intention *to work in parallel on meeting* the conditions for associate membership as well as on adjusting our entire political and economic system to meet the criteria for full-fledged membership. From the very start, we shall implement these two phases on the way to European union simultaneously, even though they are separate in procedural terms.

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The Croatian government recently – and for the first time – publicly assessed its own ability as well as the ability of Croatian society to implement everything that adjustment to EU criteria entails. To that end the Government has made public its objective to ensure that Croatia is ready for full EU membership by the end of 2006. This is ambitious but also a realistic goal. The government has not conjectured on when the Republic of Croatia will become a full member of the EU, because we are aware that this does not depend solely on our performance, but rather on the EU's institutional capacity to admit new members.

At its October session, the Croatian government adopted the Implementation Plan for the Stabilization and Association Agreement, which consists of 338 measures marking the beginning of comprehensive reforms aimed at harmonization with the EU's legal, economic and political standards. This will require efficient coordination, implementation follow-up and definition of national strategies and actions. The objective is to be ready for membership by the end of 2006. In order to underpin the effects of reforms, we intend to fully explore the CARDS programme, and we expect further bilateral assistance for institutional, economic, social and legal reforms.

But when we will achieve the necessary level of readiness for EU membership in 2006, this will signify a comprehensive change in the conditions and quality of life, work and economic activity in Croatia. This is why the date of Croatia's formal entry into the EU as a member will then no longer be as important, for already such a virtual membership will satisfy most development interests of Croatia and its citizens. Therefore, we are not embarking on the way to Europe and the achievement of European criteria just to gain EU membership as a goal unto itself, but primarily to satisfy and achieve our own development goals.

To speculate today on the rate and direction of the EU enlargement process is a thankless task. Perhaps the most feasible scenario is one where several of today's most advanced candidates join the EU by about 2004 or 2005. This means that the EU, by its next Intergovernmental Conference in 2004, should make clear its position on the grouping and re-grouping of the remaining candidates and the possible addition of new candidates. This

should be dependent upon the level of individual readiness for membership that potential candidates will have demonstrated by then. This is where Croatia's chance lies, but this also represents a great obligation not to miss such an opportunity.

The best way for Croatia and other countries in the region is to secure EU membership through its own unilateral activities and decisiveness in implementing the program of reforms, regardless of the formal course of EU enlargement. We do not have to and we actually cannot compete with other candidate countries in this process, but must compete with and outdo ourselves in developing our own capabilities to achieve the necessary level of adjustment.

Such an approach is a sufficiently ambitious, but also a sufficiently realistic one. It is the best way to highlight the different levels of readiness of the countries involved in the Stabilization and Association Process. It reaffirms the possibility of adopting an individual rather than a regional progress toward EU membership. I hope this will also make it possible for Croatia to quickly join the current candidate countries. According to a public opinion poll that the Ministry for European Integration conducted in June of 2001, this is supported and desired by 75% of Croatia's citizens.

I would hereby like to emphasize that a high level of coordination and cooperation with the entire state administration, universities, nongovernmental organizations and professional associations, as well as independent experts from many other institutions was achieved during the negotiations for the SAA. It is the coordination and cooperation that represent our major success, i.e. the mobilization of all creative forces in Croatia for the purpose of achieving our common goal – a path towards the full membership in the EU. Consequently, the SAA is the result of all the efforts, as well as numerous and intensive consultations of all the participants, which is a precondition for the success of the entire process. Meanwhile, our task is to increase our visibility in Europe, and still to challenge the EU to realize that a country that went into transition and simultaneously fought in war is a very serious candidate for EU membership.

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Regarding the ongoing debate on the future of Europe, we would like to see Europe more united around common goals and methods of integration since only such an attitude can secure its position as a global and influential player in international relations. We are presented with a great challenge, but also with a great responsibility and obligation not to miss the present generation's best opportunity.

To conclude, I would like to thank the organizer - ZEI - by saying that meetings and conferences like this one can generate ideas and facilitate the sharing of experiences in the EU enlargement process. Only through professional and organized work can we close the gap in relations with the EU.

Vladimir Kissiov

The Case of Bulgaria

The discussion today on such a fascinating topic as our vision for the future of the European Union, is natural to the expectations of our peoples to enjoy the benefits of peace, stability and prosperity across Europe.

Bulgaria in its position of a candidate country recognizes the importance of the debate on the future of the European Union. The Bulgarian side has already launched and actively seeks to stimulate the further wide-ranging discussion on a national level.

We appreciate the intention to be associated with the debate in an appropriate way. The debate seems necessary since there has not yet been a broad public discussion on the future integration process in the accession countries.

Bulgaria's target date to conclude the accession negotiations is the year 2004 at the latest. It reflects not only the realistic assessment of the progress in our preparation for EU membership, but also our willingness to be fully involved in the final stage of the debate.

As representative of a candidate country I strongly believe that we are capable of building together a clear, pragmatic and realistic vision of our common future in the framework of a strong and effective European Union.

The Bulgarians hope that there will not be any delay in the ratification process of the Treaty of Nice, which clearly states the EU's political will is for successful conclusion of the enlargement and consolidation of the integration process.

It is important for us that the provisions of the Treaty of Nice on the representation of the candidate countries in the institutional model of the Euro-

pean Union stay the basis for our participation in the decision making process in the EU after accession.

The Bulgarian side emphasizes the open character of the debate on the future of the EU. We believe that there is a need not of a static final goal of the integration process, but of a shared will for deepening of the integration. The development of a pragmatic and realistic basis should be of key importance for the EU.

We support the wider application of the “community method”, which is the very essence of the integration mechanism. It can gain a new dynamics when it is combined with enhanced forms of intergovernmental cooperation in areas which require determined support from the member states.

It is important for us that the deepening of the integration process will always be possible while respecting the national specifics and preserving its open character. The extension of the application of the qualified majority voting and the simplified differentiated procedure for enhanced cooperation form are the necessary preconditions for it.

Bulgaria believes that the European Union should be a union of nations which voluntarily delegate part of their sovereignty to institutions at community level. We are confident that this is a reliable way to guarantee our national interest by identifying it with the achievements and interests of a strong political and economic union.

Participation in the Preparatory Process

The classically applied method of a intergovernmental conference for a revision of the treaties is practically inapplicable in terms of participation of future member states, even concluded negotiations.

Future members should be fully involved from the very beginning in the preparatory work on the ground of political rather than of formal reasons. As we may recall, our joint efforts contributed to resolve the Kosovo crisis Bulgaria demonstrated political responsibility without referring to any formal reason, such as not being a member of EU and NATO. Our solidarity with the international community at that time was duly acknowledged.

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Bulgaria supports the creation of a broad and open preparatory convention, similar to the convention which worked out the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. However, this convention should include the member states and the candidates on an equal footing. Europe should not miss the opportunity to enhance democracy and build the common house together with its future inhabitants. We are indeed to be inhabitants rather than tenants.

We support also the combination of working methods, composed of the principal of the largest representation of different EU institutions in candidate states, endorsed by expert groups. This would take into consideration the requirement both for an extended basis of participation and precision and profundity in achieving and presenting draft amendments of the treaties, which are of constitutional character.

The convention's agenda must include the four issues of the post-Nice agenda as well as other pressing institutional concerns. The accession countries should have the opportunity to express their opinions. They also should be represented in the convention's presidium. The preparation of the convention will also require a strong leadership, because it covers a broader area of competencies compared to the Convention for the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Position on the Content

The list of issues enumerated in the Declaration of the Future of the Union must be not exhaustive in terms of the real debate's content. They are specifying the main directions of the discussion. The real debate should also include problems of main public concern, such as unemployment, combating trans-border crimes, illegal immigration and traffic of human beings, consumer protection and strengthening the EU role as an actor in the areas of foreign policy and defense. Especially after the terrorist act of September 11th, 2001 in the USA, it is extremely important to deepen the involvement of future member states in the formulation and implementation of the external and internal security policies.

It is obligatory to strengthen the common work in the field of Justice and Home affairs and to improve the coherence and coordination of CFSP and JHA.

The member states have to find the right formula in order to involve the future member states in the ESDP-architecture and to insure their effective participation in the decision-shaping process.

Being from the southern part of Europe, I want to underline how important it would be to formulate and adopt a southern dimension if the politicians from member states and candidate countries want to contribute to the future stability in Southeastern Europe.

Speaking about strengthening the cooperation in the field CFSP and ESDP it is of great importance neither to weaken the transatlantic solidarity nor to discourage future enlargement of the NATO as a today's mid-term and long-term guarantor for the stability.

The so-called delimitation of competencies between the European Union and the member states would affect the very basis of the Union institutional model. The explicit definition and differentiation of competencies may not be the appropriate approach. It seems essential to preserve the possibility of gradual transfer of powers from national to community and union level. This would imply a preservation of the dynamics of the integration process and would allow maintaining of a flexible and open community system.

We think that the simplification of the founding treaties could not be imperative and a task for it's own sake. The community law is a result of a unique process of evolution and reflects the balance of interests of member states – the essence of the integration mechanism. The adoption of a single simplified and fundamental text of constitutional nature would provide for consolidation of the evolutionary *acquis communautaire*.

The constitutional treaty should be in a sense that:

- It integrates all essential constituent provisions of the current treaties in a first constitutional part. A separate non-constitutional part should include technological provisions and provisions related to the implementation.

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- Europe's public and citizens are involved in its formulation, discussion and debate.
- To incorporate a revised Charter of Fundamental Rights.
- To define the EU's competencies and institutions.

Bulgaria highly appreciates the elaboration of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and welcomes its innovative nature. We are aware of the fact that though the EU institutions, as well as the present and future member states, are not withstanding the nature of the Charter as a legally binding document or political act, they will perceive it as *acquis communautaire*.

National parliaments have a major role to play in the process of shaping the decisions on community level, mostly by defining the positions of member states. Seeking of the integration of the national parliaments in the European Union's institutional structure would be hardly compatible with the present stage of its evolution and the institutional balance of the Union. The Main direction of reinforcing the role of national parliaments should be their better information and consultation by the national governments on the ongoing decision making process and the evolution of Union's policies, in compliance with their specific national political systems.

Discussing today the future of the European Union and the future enlargement process, all the politicians and people involved in the preparation of the Convention and the next IGC have to be very strong and to work with the ambition not to change the principles adopted in Helsinki and the conclusions from Nice in order to avoid the risk of establishing a new dividing lines.

I'm not very happy to say this, but the exact date of the first accession depends very much on the political decision of EU member states and their calculations how to group candidates. Different scenarios are under discussion – one of them is the so-called “big bang” of ten countries. I don't want to say that this is dangerous scenario, but I have to admit that it's a risky one, because without any clear guarantee for Bulgaria it will delay the accession of our country and will contribute to the growth of the euro-skepticism. I'm sure that the EU itself will suffer if Bulgaria, one of the

most stable states in Southeastern Europe, becomes economically unstable with weak democratic institutions. This can only contribute to the further partition of the region into ethnically capsulated enclaves, which may transform the Balkan peninsula into the “Balkan islands”.

In discussing the European project today, we have to be optimistic. This means not to draw shadow scenarios, but to stimulate the preparation of the convention and the next IGC with the main aim to contribute to a strong and united Europe.

During the next months and years before the next IGC, we will have to discuss together in many occasions all the issues touched today, and I will be happy if we can do our best for the preparation of the decision makers.

Rytis Martikonis

The Case of Lithuania

This colloquium takes place at a right time. The Progress Reports and the Strategy Paper for Enlargement have been released just a couple of days ago. We are in a year's time from the end of accession negotiations and the beginning of the ratification process. Exactly in a month, the European Council in Laeken will set up the convention to debate the future of the European Union. Thus, we have to praise the initiative of the Centre for European Integration Studies in Bonn for bringing this group to address the issues that will be increasingly important in the run up to the IGC 2004.

My intervention would consist of two major parts: *firstly*, I would like to make few points on the enlargement process and then, *secondly*, to give you some insights how we in Lithuania see the evolving discussions on the finalities of the EU.

Enlargement: First Thing First

My starting point is that enlargement is fundamentally linked to the question of the future of the Union. My logic here is simple – only successful enlargement can bring about the success of the future of the Union. Therefore the sub-title of the Commission's strategy paper - "*making success of enlargement*" - does perfectly reflect the call of the day. I would point out just three elements:

- completion of accession negotiations in time is imperative. Sticking to so called *road map* should make it possible to conclude negotiations with the most advanced countries – including Lithuania - by the end of 2002 so that they can become members of the EU in 2004;

- the EU financial framework agreed to in Berlin in 1999 provides a sufficient basis for the accession of up to ten new member states. Again - it is a strategic confirmation. We all understand the sensitivities related to the financial issues; different assumptions will be scrutinized and different suggestions might be discussed but the point of departure is right;
- next related point: reforms of EU policies or institutions should not hinder or slow down EU enlargement. The processes of accession and reforms/reviews of policies should be kept distinct. This is very important as regards negotiations on agriculture and regional policy, which constitute the main part of the EU's budget.

Clearly, the “homework” of the candidate countries is a *conditio sine qua non*. On the other hand, achievements of the transition process must also be recognized: over the past decade, countries in Central and Eastern Europe have made an unprecedented effort on the road to peaceful and essential transformation.

European integration has been a guiding principle to this. And the economic outlook of Lithuania is rather clear: privatization is nearly over; about 70 per cent of GDP is now generated by the private sector. The economic structure of Lithuania has become similar to that of the EU member states: services account for 60% of GDP, industry for a quarter of GDP, agriculture for 7.5%. GDP is rising 4-5% annually – twice as much as the EU average. Exports to the EU have been rising, thus testifying to the ability to withstand the competitive pressures.

There is another side – or shall we say: price? – to these achievements. Unemployment has been rising and it is nearly two times higher than the average in the EU. Unemployment is acute in rural areas, which in the case of Lithuania accounts for a fifth of the total workforce. Tight budgetary policies have restricted spending for social needs. Not surprisingly, sectors of social protection, health care, education are the most sensitive in terms of reforms. Economic and social transformation is not free of political costs. Popular opinion in the candidate countries relate these costs to the European integration often more than they are related in reality. We in Lithuania

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have been telling different interest groups and society at large that it is us who need reforms more than the Union or “Brussels”. But many around this table can perhaps agree that this message is not that easy to get across to people’s minds.

Thus it is not surprising that in a country like Lithuania the enlargement debate and the debate about the future of Europe are not only closely inter-linked but that the issues of enlargement are also taking precedence. To put it the other way: our domestic discussion concentrates more on the future *in* Europe rather than the future *of* Europe. Accession negotiations, discussions on the costs and benefits of the membership attract close public attention. It became increasingly obvious at the present stage of negotiations with sensitive issues being laid on the table.

Up till now public support for the EU has been sustained in Lithuania. Opinion polls show that the support for the membership among our population is slowly but steadily increasing. It stands at around 50%. Recently we tried another interesting approach: people were asked how they would describe the EU if it were a person. About 80% of the respondents gave a positive description saying that it is an honest, reliable, just and clever person. However, in addition to being described as a big and decent friend, it was also perceived as a selfish manager.

So resentments about “the long way” to EU membership are present in the East. Fears about “the cost of enlargement” are heard in the West (where else, if not in Germany, are these feelings so well known?). Against this background, I find it extremely important that the enlargement issues would also be debated in the EU member countries. Needless to say - success of enlargement depends on a public support and the current levels of public support among the EU 15 are not encouraging. The argument that enlargement is about investment, that short-term costs will be by far outweighed by long-term benefits will have to be repeated time and again both in the East and West, South and North of Europe. Political leadership is needed for this and not another dramatic reminder that we cannot take our security or prosperity for granted. Integration is the best response to internal or external challenges. More Europe – not less.

And the final observation at this point: the enlargement process must remain inclusive. There are important suggestions to that end in the Enlargement Strategy Paper. Whatever scenario becomes true in a year or two countries that are not part of the first round of enlargement should be given their fair chance. The stabilization process in Southeast Europe will be evolving into pre-accession and then accession track. On the other hand, “a new neighborhood policy” should also be expanded. There is a clear need to cooperate with future border regions of the enlarged EU – the regions to which enlargement of the EU will open new economic opportunities. Since Lithuania’s eastern border will become a part of the Union’s external border we are particularly interested in regional cooperation (e.g. Northern Dimension). This topic is also a priority of the Lithuanian chairmanship in the Council of Europe.

Ideas and Principles of the Common Future

Before moving to some of the issues of the ‘future of Europe’ debate I would like to make the following remarks:

It is not the enlargement that has triggered this debate and further reforms of the Union. I counter the opinion that enlargement is *the* cause of all the changes – and nobody likes changes - that the Union has to undergo. The Union has been in the constant process of change since the very beginning. Enlargement is part of the change, but so is inherent logic of its development. The Union is under outside pressures of globalization and that – to my mind - is among the primary reasons for further European consolidation.

For the candidate countries participation in this debate is an important learning process. We have to recapitulate the post-war integrationist discourse. We have to become part of it; finally, we have the problem of the vocabulary. It is absolutely clear that the notions of ‘federation’ or ‘constitution’, ‘solidarity’ or ‘division of competences’ have quite a different meaning for different participants of the debate.

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Having said that, the questions that will have to be addressed in the course of the debate in a run up to the IGC 2004 and in the IGC itself are what objectives and common policies will be vested in the future European Union (what do we do together?). What institutional arrangements would serve those policies and overall objectives best? How it is all to be financed?

Firstly, through the years of its existence, the European Union has proven that the *objectives and the policies* of the founders of the EC set forth in the Fifties and Sixties – the stability of the continent and the welfare of its citizens – are all alive. I would not put that to question. For me they continue to be fully relevant. And once again, the enlargement of the EU is the implementation of these objectives. If one looks at the preambles of the founding treaties or founding principles of the communities there is little to add to it. The dilemmas of “communitarianism” and “intergovernmentalism” will not be “resolved” in one or two IGCs or by making a great leap to a totally new constitutional design. This *dualism is an unique characteristic* of the whole project and what is impressive to those of us who have been observing it for the outside is that it works. At least it has worked out so far. I think that the Union can register many more successes than failures over its relatively short history. It is always easier to focus on the latter as well as to be skeptical. For that you do not have to promote, to believe, to aspire.

The principle of subsidiarity is as relevant as ever. At the turn of the century, it is still true that the most effective decisions are made at the level (regional, national or Union) which serves implementation and is closest to the citizens.

Common EU areas and policies – single market, including free movement of goods, services, capital and persons or single currency have proven their worth. Their evolution should continue together with social protection and infrastructure of economics such as energy, transport or environment.

The global role of the Union calls for new avenues for common policies such as common EU foreign and security policy, justice and home affairs. The EU has been seeking to develop and will continue to develop a stronger identity in global politics, while the third pillar should gradually

evolve into a community policy. In the candidate countries – I suppose – we are somewhat more at ease with the dynamic evolution of these two pillars. Why? Because this decade (of exciting change of the EU agenda and consequently of these two policies) has coincided with our pre-accession efforts. In a way we were exposed to these developments right from the outset and we do not bear the memories of the European political cooperation or of the different sensitivities related to Schengen Agreement still at the time when it had a life of its own.

Naturally, Lithuania has a special interest that EU builds a solid eastern as well as northern dimension. Baltic Sea cooperation also has an immense potential. Lithuania will contribute to it with its knowledge of the region also making sure that borders although fully protected and controlled are not iron barriers to our neighbors. I think Lithuania's good cooperation with its neighbors is well recognized, including different projects with the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation.

Among the important questions is how the founding *principle of solidarity* will be applied in an enlarged Union. Our reasoning here is one of analogy. If cohesion and structural policies accelerated the growth of Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Greece then why this should not repeat in the Baltic States or elsewhere? And solidarity should mean solidarity also from those who have been able to benefit from it over decades. In other words, credibility of the European integration rests on the degree in which its successes are given the means and conditions to be repeated in the expanded Union.

Bigger or smaller - the European Union will need a budget. Since the question about how the enlargement is financed is a fundamental issue and it will have to be addressed, it would also be sensible to look at the bigger picture and think whether it is a right moment to consider a gradual reform of the EU financing and budgeting. Perhaps time has come to take a closer look at the possibilities of guaranteeing the EU institutions more independent sources of income than the budgets of the member states.

One requirement, however, here should be a clear linkage between the present and the future. People are allergic to futurology. Real people see real problems, which should, in their view, be necessarily addressed. Perhaps

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this is a very simplified but a “real” rephrase of what we call *legitimacy*. Democratic legitimacy of the Union is something that will be evolving over longer time and it will have to face not only all the ‘traditional’ components of representation, circulation of power and social acceptance, etc. but also the changing nature of democracy (one may wish to discuss the case of referendum in Ireland) and social organization.

Secondly, European institutions – for me - are a derivation of the objectives. There is hardly a need for a “revolution” in the way the Council, Parliament, Commission, Court and other institutions interact. The institutions have to evolve gradually, the same way as the objectives of the EU are evolving – but that does not mean that there should be no change. Things can always be done better and ongoing reviews of the EU governance and on the Council functioning are good examples that there is a room for improving, for running the enterprise more efficiently.

Lithuanian thinking rests on simple but tested experiences. Again - the *communitarian method* that has made the EU what it is today means for us that we are talking about a Union that accommodates the big and protects the small. Not the other union that we had the misfortune to test for fifty years. Strong institutions guarantee a fair game. That’s what we learned from the textbooks. That’s something that seems to work well in accession negotiations. Stronger institutions underlie the cohesion of the Union and have so far been the main “engine” of European integration. Arguing for strengthening of the inter-governmentalism at the expense of communitarianism is, to a large extent, an attempt in a way to turn the integration clock backwards. Thus the community method must be preserved, strengthened and extended as the EU enlarges.

Of course, in some cases the intergovernmental method might also be needed. Perhaps on the ‘questions of war and peace’ it may be the only way where a supra-national method cannot be introduced for the time being or at all.

The dilemma of these two methods can be further addressed by a clearer delimitation of competencies. The division of power should not, therefore, be limited to the principle of subsidiarity but must also say which issues

and areas pertaining to the European competencies are bound to be dealt with in a communitarian way and which should be left for intergovernmental cooperation. Such a division should be accompanied by a common understanding that European integration has not reached its limits and should thus be pursued further. In any case, different operating modes for the Union need be considered on the basis of functional needs depending on the Union's objectives, areas and scope of action, rather than seen as an ideological shibboleth.

Of course, the structure of 25 and more nations will be large and not easy to govern. But our union must be functioning. Alternatives to that are very, very bleak. Sovereignty is not in question here. From the 15th to the 18th century, the Lithuanian and the Polish Commonwealth was governed by the principle of veto (*liberum veto!*): for that time it was democracy and sovereignty at its extremes. It was nice at the beginning but led to a catastrophe of the state later on. That was the end of sovereignty. Thus, from its own history Lithuania knows that too much vetoes don't work. We realize that more and more areas of European common policy can be exempted from the veto right in the future. On both sides of the enlargement we shall be moving towards the *qualified majority voting* (QMV).

Representing your '*national*' interests is one more thing which we have to discuss in the context of the policy reforms or application of the QMV in the enlarged Union. It is my conviction that interests of the new member states would fit into the general composition of interests of the present Union. Among the countries that are joining the Union there are countries that are more free traders (and free marketiers) and those that are more protectionist; there are Protestant and Catholic; there are southern and nearly 'northern' countries; there are also small and big ones. I say this because I believe that the national interests can be and will be integrated into the existing EU fabric, and in a similar way that decisions in the EU were never taken on "big vs. small" basis we will not be seeing "old vs. new" voting whatever the voting procedures or weighting of votes may suggest. Look at the accession negotiations or the whole of the accession process starting with the Europe Agreements. I have a difficulty in recalling a coordinated action – speaking one voice – from the side of acceding countries. I do not

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believe that membership in the Union would foster the Eastern and Central European “newcomers club”.

Diversity of the European Union is bound to produce various initiatives of smaller groups of countries who later offer their experiences to the entire Union. Such initiatives are legitimized under the title of "*enhanced co-operation*" and have, throughout modern history, served as motor of European integration. But, however good this arrangement is, we may need a safeguard for it not to break loose and fall out of our hands. Exclusive clubs or centres or cores should not threaten solidarity. They should not lead us into a European Union which has two standards, two policies, two governments, two budgets – one for the selected, rich and lucky, and the other for the rest. We have to strive at *a coherent European Union*. We understand enhanced cooperation as an inclusive process in the spirit of Jean Monnet. The rules of enhanced co-operation as laid out in Amsterdam and Nice can be effectively used. The enhanced co-operation should be an instrument of integration, not exclusion.

Before concluding, a few remarks on *the state of the debate in Lithuania*. The Lithuanian Foreign Minister and members of Parliament have initiated discussions covering various aspects pertaining to future shape and policies of the Union with various interest groups, youth organizations, political parties and other segments of civil society. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has a personal commitment to induce discussion inside the country. The President will be launching the civic society forum early next year. A group of scholars also charted their visions on the future of the European Union sector-wise and as a whole.

Participation of candidate countries in the workings of Convention is also crucial for legitimizing the debate itself. It is also an important beginning of the bigger Union's functioning. I would not overestimate the formal part of the process; however, it is my strong belief that accession treaties will be signed well before the end of the Convention and Lithuanian participants will be endorsing the final document with a feeling of good accomplishment. We know the Union that was started by J. Monnet, R. Schuman, A. de Gasperi, W. Hallstein and others. We know the Union that was build

Rytis Martikonis

further by generation of F. Mitterrand, H. Kohl and J. Delors. Now is the turn for G. Schröder and P. Lipponen, T. Blair and L. Jospin, as well as A. Kwasniewski, V. Vike-Freiberga and V. Havel .

At the end of the day it is all about responsibility. I would like to testify here that the closer countries of Central and Eastern Europe are coming to the day of EU membership, the more we contemplate our responsibility. It is with this feeling that we have to continue the European adventure.

Imrich Marton

The Case of Slovakia

Twelve years will have elapsed on November 17 since the day when the Slovaks and Czechs made the first step on their way to democracy. At the same time those events opened the door for these two nations of Central Europe to the European Union which, I hope, Slovakia will join very soon. Accession of Slovakia to the EU will so button up the effort that started at the November evening twelve years ago.

Slovakia welcomed the Declaration on the Future of the European Union adopted in Nice which asked member states as well as candidate countries to open a wide debate on the future shape of the union. We are aware that there are a lot of challenges which the EU must face at the threshold of the new millennium. Globalization, forthcoming unprecedented enlargement of the Union, elimination of the so-called democratic deficit of the European institutions were just the main challenges that initiated the debate on the future of the EU. In September, these challenges have been joined by a new one - terrorism as a threat to global stability, security and peace, and in a wider context also as a threat to freedom and democracy.

National Convention on the European Future of Slovakia and the European Convention

The debate on the future of the European Union has two dimensions: a national one and a European one.

In Slovakia we have been inspired by the positive example of the convention which worked at the text of the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and so we have created the National Convention on

the European Future of Slovakia. This is a platform for the nation-wide discussion on the future of the EU from the Slovak point of view. It has no rigid internal organizational structures. The moderator of meetings is the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr. Jan Fige. Certain coordinating work is carried out by a working group of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The National Convention associates the representatives from various spheres of our society. It comprises representatives of parliamentary political parties, non-governmental organizations, the church, the academic field and self-government. The ambition of the National Convention is to initiate a wide debate on the issues concerning the future of Europe and to shape its course. The sittings of the National Convention are public. Its official web page is being completed these days.

The National Convention has met twice so far. Its third session ought to be summoned in January 2002 and it should link up on the summit in Laeken and assess its results from the Slovak point of view.

In the matter of the European dimension of this debate we are, as well as other candidate countries in favor of the full participation of candidate countries in the discussion on the future of Europe, including the equal participation in the European Convention on these issues that should start working by the beginning of 2002. Candidate countries expressed their will to take part equally in all stages of this debate already during the informal meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs which took place in Geneva in September this year. The full engagement of candidate countries into the debate on the future of the EU should be concerned as a legitimate requirement as this debate will have direct effect on our national interests considering our integration ambitions.

Identity

One of the principal questions in the context of the European integration is the question of identity. National identity, European identity and their mutual relationship. This problem has two aspects.

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First, it is the so-called necessity to build the European identity. Let me disagree with this attitude, because if we want to build the European identity like something new, something artificial, the European integration will lose its meaning and the European Union will become artificial as well. I can demonstrate it on a concrete example though its essence was very contrary: disintegration. When the former Czech-Slovakia split, the reason was not to build the Slovak identity. On the contrary: the Slovak identity existed and was very strong. The establishment of the independent republic was just a form of the realization of this identity.

In relation to European integration the economic dimension of the integration is sometimes exorbitantly emphasized. At the same time the results of the political sphere are omitted. It seems as if we have misjudged reasons with consequences 56 years after the end of the Second World War. In the Fifties of the past century, it was just the ambition to conciliate mortal enemies which led the Fathers of Europe to the idea of the European integration. The economic integration represented only one of the means to achieve this aim and not contrariwise.

The number of those who can remember the cataclysm of the Second World War is decreasing and the threat of the communist expansion vanished as well. Sometimes it seems as if Europeans have forgotten to what they owe thanks for the fact that Europe is nowadays a continent of stability, democracy, freedom and prosperity. I am therefore deeply convinced that there is not a lack of European identity in Europe, but there is a lack of an emotional basis for the conclusion of the European integration process.

Another aspect of this problem lies in the concerns of losing the national identity in the united Europe. The Slovaks lived for centuries in the Hungarian kingdom, later in the Hapsburg monarchy. In 1918, Slovakia became a part of former Slovakia-Slovakia. Despite of these facts the Slovak national identity has never vanished. On the contrary, eight years after the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic our citizens understand and accept the challenges of Europe and of today's world. According to the latest polls more than 70% of our citizens are in favor of integration into the European Union.

A nation and a state are not the same entity. The sovereignty of a state is derived from the sovereignty of a nation and not contrariwise. A nation in Europe is the base of a nation state, but a nation is not a state and a state is not a nation. If a sovereign nation freely decides to realize its right to self-determination in a new form, this decision must be respected and must not be called into question by national populism. Nowadays, the European Union is this new form. The European integration represents a new form of the realization of national interests in the conditions of the globalized world.

If I have mentioned above a new form of the realization of national interests I do not mean creation of a European "superstate", the so-called "United States of Europe". I mean a new form of international coexistence and cooperation in which a sovereign nation decides to transfer a part of its sovereignty to a supranational subject. The European Union will never be a state in the capacity as we know it today. On the other hand, contemporary nation states cannot rigorously insist on the status which they have today or they had in the past. Zbigniew Brzezinski expressed this idea in his speech during his visit to Slovakia a year ago, when he said that we were entering the era in which we would witness the end of the Vestfal system of the sovereignty of nation states.

The process of the European integration is a unique one. At present this process is entering the phase of political integration. It leads to the fact that terms like "constitution", "federation" and other sensitive ones are emerging in the discussion. The application of exact terminology is a prerequisite for the avoidance of misunderstandings in each debate. On the other hand, terminological discrepancies could hamper the discussion on the matter of the problems that Europe faces today in order to remain fully competitive in the conditions of the globalized world and capable to take decisions and act in the conditions of an enlarged union. Nowadays, in this phase of the debate we should aim at finding the merit and define the content of the ongoing processes. I would like to emphasize the words of president Johannes Rau who in his "plea for a European constitution" said that we had to discuss the substance rather than argue about terms, as it would be easier to

come to an agreement on the substance of what it had meant than on these terms.

The European Constitution

I have already mentioned that Slovakia created the National Convention for the purpose of debate on the future of the European Union, the aim of which is to work as a discussion forum and thus initiate a nation-wide discussion on these issues. At the last session there was a clear demand to keep the open character of the debate and not to seek for the consensus on each question at all costs. To the contrary, there was an opinion that the convention should state common positions only on minimum questions on which the members of the convention will find absolute concord.

I have also mentioned that the National Convention has had two sittings so far. On the basis of the results of these sessions I can generalize some developing trends concerning the discussion on the future of Europe from the Slovak point of view.

The Declaration on the Future of the European Union defined four basic issues of the debate on the future of the EU. I will try to adduce some remarks concerning these basic themes of this debate.

Considering the necessity of bringing the Union as close as possible to the citizens, the simplification of the Founding Treaties seems to be one of the most important questions in the context of this debate. The European Union should provide its citizens with a document containing the definition of the values on which the Union is built and of the objectives of the Union as well as the arrangement of the basic relations concerning the function of the Union. This is a point where the simplification of the Founding Treaties is closely connected with the question of the "European constitution". This question is, in my opinion, the key question in the context of the future integration of Europe. The adoption of the European constitution will undoubtedly require a repression of many emotional and political prejudices. However, the transition of the European integration process to the phase of

the political union will beyond any doubt require such a political and legal document.

How should this document look like? Short, clear and readable are the criteria stated in the Declaration of Milan on a European Constitution adopted by three European think-tanks in November 2000. One can not do anything but agree with these criteria, since one of the main attributes of this document should become transparency and one of the main functions making the relations in the Union clear as it is still being perceived by the citizens as a bureaucratic conglomerate administrated from Brussels.

Finally, it is also in the interest of the Union itself to provide the citizens with a transparent model of basic relations and mechanisms of the EU and thereby achieve higher involvement of the citizens in European issues. I have mentioned above that I consider the European constitution as a key question of the debate. On the other hand, this question is, at the same time, the most sensitive one. Therefore I do not dare to say when there will be a sufficient political will in Europe to adopt such a document - regardless of either it will be called constitution or otherwise. However, I would like to emphasize another significant point of this document. I have mentioned above that in Europe there is a lack of emotional basis for the deepening of integration processes. A big leap in this context is to be the implementation of the Euro, which will soon replace twelve national currencies. The adoption of the European constitution could signify a definitive breakthrough in this direction. The European constitution would be nothing less than the materialization of the European identity. The adoption of such a document could give Europe that emotional impetus I have mentioned above.

The question on the content of the European constitution remains open as well. Another issue defined in the Declaration on the Future of the European Union automatically emerges in this context - the status of the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union. I suppose that just this Charter should become the important part of the European constitution. This would express the devotion of the EU to the protection of human rights and freedoms. Moreover, through the incorporation of the Charter to the European constitution the Charter would achieve legally binding status.

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At the same time only such a status can provide the European citizens with an effective guarantee for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms on the European level. In this context the question of the procedural guarantor of the protection of human rights on the European level also emerges. A most natural solution of this question seems to be an extension of the jurisdiction of the European court of justice on this field.

Another very important part of the European constitution seems to be a delimitation of the powers between the European union and the member states, which is also according the Declaration on the Future of the European Union another main issue of the debate. This part of the discussion is of immense importance for several reasons:

- a) the clear delimitation of the powers of the Union on one hand and the member states on the other hand would contribute towards increasing of transparency of the relations in the Union and thus bringing the Union closer to its citizens.
- b) the exact delimitation of powers would provide member states with guarantees for protection of national interests against excessive and unjustified Union influence and thus will become the main instrument of the protection of national identity.
- c) the clear delimitation of powers would create adequate space for more flexible and more effective European decision-making and acting.

There are a lot of patterns for vertical division of powers. The ideal pattern for Europe could be the one which would explicitly define the exclusive powers of the Union completed with the general clause according to which everything that does not fall within the exclusive competence of the European Union should belong to the competence of the member states. Effectiveness of the decision-making will probably require also the definition of the fields of shared competence, in which both the Union and the member states could take decisions. Which level of decision-making is competent in the concrete case should then be determined in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.

In connection with the vertical division of powers, the regions and their status are sometimes mentioned, too. The principal problem in this context lies in the different status of the regions of Europe. Whereas the lands in Germany or in Austria are the member states of the federation, the regions in other member states (except Belgium) as well as in candidate countries are only administrative regions. It means that these regions are created by the central government which also defines their competencies. Therefore we can hardly expect that these states will be in favor of defining regional competencies on a European level.

When speaking about the vertical division of powers, one cannot forget the horizontal division of powers. The Declaration on the Future of the European Union stated as one of the main issues within the Post-Nice process only the future role of the national parliaments in the European architecture. However, in my opinion, this question must be solved in the wider context, including the consideration on the role of the European parliamentarism as a whole and the division of powers among the main European institutions, in particular in the framework of the triangle - Council, Commission and European parliament.

In consequence of the specific development of the European integration certain deformations occurred in particular between the legislation and execution. The speed of the transfer of decision making to the Council has not been followed by the growth of the competencies of the European parliament as the only directly elected European institution. Consequently legal acts at the European level are adopted in the Council consisting of the representatives of the national executive power. This is the essence of what is called democratic deficit of the European institutions. Therefore the elimination of the democratic deficit will likely require the strengthening of the European parliament, not only the strengthening of the role of the national parliaments.

Foreign and Security Policy

Shortly after the beginning of the debate on the future of the EU, we all who deal with these issues, had to realize that this debate may not be re-

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duced only on the four questions defined in the Declaration on the Future of the European Union but it must remain open to other problems of Europe and the world.

The events that happened in the United States two months ago indirectly defined another point to this discussion - common foreign and security policy and its further development. These events have united Europe more than ever before. Candidate countries share the common position of the European Union towards the fight against terrorism and in fact they act as if they were members of the European Union.

The most frequent reaction to the events of September 11th was the statement that the world would never be the same again. What does it mean in the conditions of the EU and in wider relations of future development of the world?

First and foremost, everybody had to realize the nature of the threats the world faces today and will face in the future. The traditional defense policy concentrated on the external enemy was overcome by the attack on the United States. Although the attack was organized from abroad, the fact is that the strike itself came from the heart of the USA. We all had to realize that the real enemy in the 21st century is not standing on our borders. He might live in the neighboring flat. The frontiers between the internal and external security policy in this context have disappeared. The real defense and security policy in the 21st century requires effective internal measures implemented and coordinated in the wide international cooperative framework. In the conditions of the European Union suitable prerequisites are created for that. The Union should only use them.

Another aspect in these relations consists in the responsibility of the EU for future development of the world. For centuries, Europe has been the centre of the world's development, until it lost this position after two disastrous world wars. Therefore, when the common foreign and security policy of the EU was coming into being, the main intention of the EU was to regain its lost positions in the world and become a "global player". Today, when this policy is being developed, one must be aware of the European Union's responsibility for the future arrangement of the world.

What the world needs now is political reconciliation and economic consolidation. The responsibility of the European Union lies in the fact that the EU must be an example and prove that it is possible. If the idea of European integration symbolizes something, it symbolizes these very values. After the Second World War the idea of the European integration succeeded in reconciliation of mortal enemies. Today, the idea of the European integration helps us to eliminate the last remainders of the Iron Curtain.

Since their establishment, the USA have been the lighthouse of freedom and democracy for those who have been looking for these values. The European Union could become a lighthouse of reconciliation and progress in the 21st century.

The United Nations Organization proclaimed the year 2001 a year of dialogue among civilizations. At that time it could not have known what would happen in September 2001. European civilization is being united in the European Union. It is our common responsibility to successfully finish this process. The European Union could thereby become an example for other civilizations to find a common language and consequently become a subject of the dialogue among civilizations, a dialogue which could solve global problems.

Iveta Sulca

The Case of Latvia

The theme – the future of the Union – is of particular importance to all of us, both the current members and the newcomers. The very process of discussion helps us to develop a common vision of Europe. I fully support striving to make the Union more transparent, more equal, and more efficient. Also, the Commission's White Paper on European Governance with a proposal to involve candidate member states into the Lisbon process serves this purpose.

In March 2001, the Swedish EU presidency invited us to take part in a discussion on the future of the EU. The presidency did a great job launching this wide-ranging debate of the scale and substance experienced never before. Indeed, the time was ripe for such debates. The new century, enlargement and globalization have brought the development of Europe to the point from which simple linear movement is no longer possible. A logical need has arisen for Europeans - both candidate and member countries - to use the advantages and minimize the negative consequences of globalization. The solution lies in increasing competitiveness along with preservation of one's individuality in the conditions of globalization. A need has emerged once again to consider and discuss the meaning and goals of the integration. The new Europe strives for democratic legitimacy on the grounds of a broad public support in all areas, not least the one touching upon the future of a common Europe.

One might think that Latvia currently has only one important task – to complete negotiations as soon as possible and to be good enough to join the EU. Latvia is highly motivated and determined to join the EU. However, we are acceding not because of the accession itself. We want to see Europe

as an effective and competitive actor playing on the global scale and Latvia as a deeply integrated part of it. I am confident that Latvia's aspirations to become a member of the EU stem from the fundamental interests of our society and nation. We integrate into the EU in order to realize the interests of our society. The EU is something more than a purely economic concept. The common values and ideals offer the most solid foundations for creating a family of stable, secure and prosperous nations. By pursuing this road we consolidate our national independence, democracy and advance towards public welfare and security. In this way, we make the influence of Latvia in the international arena stronger while preserving our cultural identity and the Latvian language.

It is with great interest that we follow the launched debate on Europe's future and we would like to use Europe's historical opportunity by actively contributing to this debate. The idea of Europe can only develop by making new contributions. The very process of discussions is assisting to crystallizing the common vision of Europe.

As we know, the history of the European Union began with close economic cooperation in the middle of the twentieth century. It meant the triumph of integration over the system of balance of power in Europe and marked the end of threats of war. The speed and scale of the construction of a new Europe over decades surprises positively with dynamics. While in 1951 six countries initiated integration, in 1995 it already embraced 15 members and in the predictable future their number may grow to 30 member countries. The period between each new EU treaty also becomes shorter and shorter. While almost 30 years elapsed between the Rome Treaties and the amendments to these treaties by the 1986 Single European Act, Maastricht Treaty and Amsterdam Treaty were separated by six years and two years passed between Amsterdam and Nice. And whether also the political integration will be the future of the European Union, which implies a common foreign policy and defense, a European Government, a European Constitution, will become clear at the EU Intergovernmental Conference in 2004. The development of the EU is a continuous process.

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The existence and development of the EU has shown that cooperation is the most efficient method of protecting their national interests. But nobody can tell for sure, yet, what the EU will look like in 10-15 years. As the leaders of the EU member countries outline the vision of the future of Europe, they talk about a European Federation with a two-house parliament, a European government and constitution. Others on their turn insist that intergovernmental cooperation should go on and representatives of national parliaments should take part in the EU councils. However, despite of these contradictory viewpoints, we have to strive for a common vision. The EU is not a frozen union. Until now the EU has already asserted its ability to create and implement its future vision – in 1986 member countries came to an agreement on the internal market as of 1992 and in 1991 they decided that a single currency would be in circulation as of 2002. The success of every project is primarily based on the ability to visualize the possible aspects of the future development.

The post-Nice process and EU enlargement are two very closely interlinked issues. Both have apparent potential to play a great role in the forming of public opinion in the member countries and the candidate countries. If we want to succeed we should send clear and strong political signals to our people. Therefore Latvia proposes that both member states and candidate states could jointly elaborate on a "Declaration on the Political Future of Europe" before launching the next IGC. To my mind, common understanding of our common future is the very basis for fortune – strength is in unity. The adoption of this declaration would contribute to a more foreseeable result at the IGC 2004. Not so long ago, the EU already experienced a situation when all the main decisions were taken in the last night. I would say that we need a process which is open and clear and no “last night shock” in the IGC 2004 is possible.

The citizens of Latvia will have to vote for the accession to the European Union. Therefore it is of crucial importance to explain to the public what, why and how the European Union is. Most members and candidates have already launched broad national debates. Active participation in the public debate is needed because we do not talk about an abstract future of an abstract Europe but a very concrete future of Latvia, Poland, the Czech Re-

public as well as all the other countries in Europe. The presidency initiative served as a stimulus for the Latvian government to initiate a debate on Europe's future in broad society. We are convinced that a greater public involvement will foster greater support for both - the idea of a common Europe and enlargement. The idea of integration is alive only if it enjoys public support. For us the public opinion in Latvia on everything that pertains to the European Union is extremely important. We must talk all together actively about what the EU is today and what Latvia wishes the future of the EU to be because wrong assumptions often spring from lack of knowledge. In the very beginning of May, an active discussion on the EU was launched on the Internet portal "Delfi". It turned out that the public debate on Europe's future reflects the same fears which come up when people are asked if they would vote for accession to the EU. Surprisingly quite similar fears are expressed by the societies of member states. People claim that once the possibility to join a union arises, the logical question emerges whether one can leave it, too. The EU member countries have democratic systems that irrespective of the nature of the existing government can replace it by peaceful means through the majority of people's vote in fair and transparent elections. A lot of concern might be eliminated by informing the society and fostering debate. People are concerned about the bureaucratization and lack of openness in the EU, about what will happen to our independence, what will happen to our national identity and culture. This almost always stems from lack of information and fear of changes.

The declaration adopted in the EU Nice summit on the future of the European Union mentions the main issues to be discussed: How to share competence between the EU and member countries? Should the Charter on Fundamental Rights have legal status? How to make the EU treaties understandable while not changing their essence? What to do with national parliaments?

We, being a future member country, have legitimate rights and duties together with the governments of Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Spain and all other member countries to make decisions pertaining to our future in Europe. A need has emerged for a framework of discussion, such as a convention that would engage parliaments, NGOs and academic circles in a

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comprehensive and open discussion on the development of the European idea. It would present an opportunity to embrace the opinion of wide circles of public. Only those decisions that are made in this way will enjoy the necessary public support. However, the final decisions are to be made in the traditional Intergovernmental Conference. We welcome the decision of the General Affairs Council of October 8, 2001 about the representation of the candidate states in the convention. We hope that at the Laeken EU summit the candidates will be given the voting rights. Granting the candidates with voting rights the current member states would show genuine determination not only to treat the EU candidate states as equal partners but to have them as members of the club as soon as possible.

Here, I would like to reflect only on some issues that seems of importance to me.

Euro-skeptics maintain that the work and bureaucracy of the EU are not transparent. Indeed, the system of EU treaties is very complicated. Even lawyers of member countries admit it. A clear need has emerged to formulate a logically structured text that the EU citizens would be able to understand. It is indeed not easy to accept what is difficult to understand. Few of us would buy a car that requires reading thousands of pages of instructions before driving, although it does not mean at all that it is a bad car. The EU legislation is 80.000 pages long. The simpler the treaties, the easier to understand the principles of the operation of the EU.

One of our common goals is to make the EU more *people-friendly* which means making it more transparent, more efficient and more understandable to its citizens. These issues were touched also in the European Commission's White Paper on European Governance. The EU is not a Union of lawyers. Instead, it is a Union of citizens. We should search for the possibilities how to make the link between the EU and the citizens much stronger. Perhaps, replacing the "top-down" approach with a "bottom-up" approach would be the possible solution.

The replacement of the founding treaties by a "European Constitution" has been discussed more and more seriously over the recent years. I regard the elaboration of a constitutional treaty of the European Union that would de-

scribe such fields as the rights of the EU citizens and the institutional structure of the EU as a logical step over the long period within the European integration process.

The opponents of European integration claim that it would not be possible for people to directly influence the decision-making process of the EU. There are indications that European citizens do not feel attached to the EU. Despite electing the European Parliament they somehow do not feel that special link between them and the Union. We remember the low turnout of the last elections of the European Parliament. In my opinion, the feeling that citizens cannot directly influence decision-making results from the insufficient role of national parliaments in the EU. By taking part in national parliamentary elections, each citizen realizes his or her opportunity to influence the development of his or her nation. I believe that the issue of greater involvement of citizens in the EU processes can be reasonably addressed by strengthening the role of national parliaments. It would assure citizens that their national interests are taken into account in EU decision-making. This we consider an issue of national importance. We are prepared to actively contribute to seek the institutional arrangements to make it come true.

The euroskeptics are keen on pointing out that Brussels will decide everything for us and that it has excessive authority, that upon accession we shall be forced to eat sauerkraut and Brussels sprouts with our goose on Martin's Day. It is not like this at all. The European Union is not a centralized state. It is "only" a transnational organization to which its member countries have delegated a part of their competence. The elaboration and implementation of the entire national policy is and will remain our business except for fields that we shall delegate to the EU. And even then we shall determine the way these common policies will be implemented in our country. For example, in education: while the EU provides guidelines for mutual recognition of university degrees we shall always decide ourselves for how long and what subjects shall be taught in our schools and universities. Also after the accession to the EU, Latvia will decide whether to transfer specific policies to the EU. Such decisions require the unanimous vote of all mem-

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ber countries. It precludes making decisions that essentially influence our life without our participation.

The current debate on the future outlook of the EU shows that there is no single understanding of the meaning of the term federalism. “There are as many viewpoints as there are men.” This also applies to the use of the term ‘federalism’ in the EU context. Everybody attaches his own meaning to this term. In our opinion, the term ‘federalism’ means decentralization, subsidiarity and multi-level governance and not centralization of powers. When we use the term European Federation, it must not be understood as European supranational state. We can wholly agree with the concept of the European Union as a federation of national states. Latvia understands the European Federation as a federation of independent national states. You must agree that the strength of the EU lies in its diversity. National states join forces for a common good. When speaking about the term federation and federal Europe, we should remember that the EU already now looks and acts like a federation. When we take the definition of the term federation, the following conclusions can be made – firstly, already now the citizens of the EU have a double citizenship – that of each member state and that of the Union, which at the same time is a single citizenship; secondly, each member state has its national constitution and at the same time the EU also is moving towards a constitution or, to be more precise, the Constitutional Treaty; thirdly, from the next year the citizens of member states will have the single currency - Euro – in their hands; fourthly, every member state can make legislation that only works within a particular state and at the same time the EU can make legislation that is binding for all member states. So we can conclude that the EU is neither a pure international organization, or a community of totally independent states, nor a supranational state. The EU is a fusion both with supranational and intergovernmental elements.

From the very beginnings the history of the European Union has been a history of development, a history of integration development. Could the development have a finality? Definitely not. The integration of the European Union is the answer to challenges of globalization and to changes it brings. The development and integration are never-ending ones. And the

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more we reflect, the more ideas we provide for a fruitful further debate on the development of European idea. As Sir Winston Churchill once said: “The empires of the future are the empires of the mind.”

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