

**Saturday 31 March 2007 17h**

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## **Forum Belgrade**

**Panel discussion: 50 years after the Rome Treaties– a new approach?**

- Reintegration of the region
- Europe of the citizens, not of the nation states
- How to achieve a Europe of the citizens

**Check Against Delivery  
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort**

**Belgrade, 31<sup>th</sup> March 2007**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

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The notion of United Europe is almost as old as the continent itself. Many European thinkers and politicians have dreamed about the time when the European states will turn their back on hatred and the conflicts they have had and will unite in the name of their common historical and cultural heritage and for the sake of peace and prosperity. Still, up to this day, it is hard to believe that this union, built upon the sharing of power has indeed happened. That the pooling of resources and common borders is a fact.

After the end of WW II the big European cities lie in ruins and the spirit that has shaped the image of Europe is broken. A group of visionary and determined politicians gather together and conclude that the continent needs to find a way for people to start living together in trust and cooperation. And they succeed. Led by the hope that Europe will become a Union.

A Union that according to Conrad Adenauer is, I quote – “a cultural community, a community of values with a common historical heritage, with a present shared and lived by us all and with a future that must be shaped in unity and solidarity.”

As an aside, in the midst of our present challenges to find a way forward, it might be instructive to recall that it wasn't easy back then, either. The British diplomat Russell Bretherton – who acted as an observer at the 1955 Messina conference preparing the Treaty of Rome - is famously reported as having told the delegates of the six founding member states that the project was doomed before it started: "The future treaty which you are discussing has no chance of being agreed; if it was agreed, it would have no chance of being ratified; and if it were ratified, it would have no chance of being applied. And if it was applied, it would be totally unacceptable to Britain."

Today, 50 years later, I think we can say that the philosophy of the Rome Treaties, the philosophy of unification is a uniquely successful experiment in the establishment of political institutions after WW II.

I believe this is so because Europe is many things to many people. It is different things to different generations, as one would expect from a living organism evolving through time. By and large, the EU has developed through 4 waves of integration.

In the aftermath of the destruction of World War II, integration started as a project of peace and the establishment of the rule of law. Might was no longer right.

The second wave of integration formed around the objective of prosperity, with the establishment of the Single Market.

The third wave was essentially about security, with the reunification of large tracts of territories formerly under authoritarian communist regimes.

And currently we are in the midst of the fourth wave of integration, as EU is trying to respond to the challenges of globalisation.

And concurrently with the present wave, we are engaged with the accession process with South Eastern Europe, a region for which none of the four waves has lost their relevance.

The prospect of membership in the Union was instrumental in triggering the political change in Eastern and South Eastern Europe, becoming a catalyst for many reforms in the countries of the region, and contributing to their modernization. The EU challenges prejudice and quarantines nationalism. It supports institutions such as the European Human Rights Court that not only oppose but also issue laws against the atrocities that have marked Europe's past.

In South Eastern Europe in particular, the EU membership perspective is a crucial means for guaranteeing peace, stability and developing mutual understanding.

This perspective is also a strong motive for continuing the complex reforms that would allow the countries here to become a part of model for success that EU offers. I am certain, based on my experience, that at the end of the accession process the countries from South Eastern Europe will be more mature in all aspects – from human rights protection to administrative capacity and from environmental policies to the development of culture. They will be a better place to live for the next generation.

A real test for South Eastern Europe is the effective regional cooperation that must be based on European principles and comply with EU policies. There can hardly be integration with the bigger whole if we fail to attain integration locally in our own region.

It has sometimes been suggested that South Eastern Europe has generated more history than it could possibly bear. That it has too many memories of dramatic events that are passed on from generation to generation. Yet I think that through our daily efforts to ascertain more communal integration in all activities across the policy spectrum, through cultural policies and with forums such as the present one, we will keep our focus on the future and not be bogged down by the past. This is the only way and this is what Europe is about: the future.

The European idea is more than integration within the common market space and the free movement of persons. It is even something more than the sharing of common values of freedom and democracy. Europe is about the future and about creating a space where identities can flourish.

To continue with an effective enlargement policy, we must all, politicians and civil organizations, undertake the responsibility to work as actively as possible with the general public. We need to make the case, in simple and meaningful terms, why the enlargement of the Union is in their own interest, how it will broaden their possibilities. We should organize open debates where both fears and hopes could be expressed, where myths and prejudices would be tackled head-on. In other words, create more trust through dialogue.

How, then, to achieve a Europe of citizens and not just of nation states? The EU started off as a project of the elites, yet, despite this, it has always been more of a civil project – aimed at improving the quality of life of each individual, through the promotion of freedom, democracy, competition, cooperation. Belonging to the Union overflows the framework of national consciousness.

Recognising the need for the Union to go further to addresses the expectations of EU citizens, the Commission last year adopted a policy driven agenda which – a citizens' agenda - to deliver results for Europe.

It is centered on initiatives dealing with the single market; with solidarity, access and sustainability; with security, enlargement and the role of the EU in the world. These are the areas where Citizens expect and we believe we can deliver concrete results, thereby increasing the legitimacy of the EU itself in the eyes of its citizens.

Initiatives such as Citizens for Europe are very important, making the public an actual partner in the formulation of policies and bolstering civil participation and involvement in defining the European agenda. .

The accessibility and accountability of the European institutions is also very important. I don't believe the European Institutions – certainly not the one I work for – compare unfavourably with national institutions in terms of accessibility. But this does not mean that we should not look for ways to develop things further. One recent example in this regard is the European Transparency Initiative which the Commission recently adopted. The goal of the initiative is to achieve even greater access to the European institutions, greater accountability before society, including financial accountability on allocating EU funds, as well as the improvement in the control of lobbying procedures.

Even with the risk of sounding immodest, I will submit that giving a greater weight to consumer outcomes in the policy design in other areas and maintaining the unquestionable rights of the European consumers are also part of the steps we are making in strengthening the civil nature of EU.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

EU is a civil project whose aim has always been to defend identity without excluding differences. This is the experience to not only integrate the Other but to also get to know and accept his/her otherness. Because differences are a given and unity could be achieved only through making an effort. The model that we need to promote is the respect for the actual differences between You and me.

Yet we must also work for the creation of a common framework. We must have the will-power to understand the other and communicate with him/her. It is not the policy of quotas and the isolation of homogenous groups that we should opt for. We should instead try to learn to live with others.

In bringing Europe home to its citizens, and bringing South Eastern Europe home to the EU we need to ensure that our identities and our differences can be fruitfully accommodated in our shared enterprise. It is certainly to be preferred to – and here I will quote one of the great theoreticians of otherness – Tzvetan Todorov – “the morbid enclosure in identity.”

Thank you for the attention.