

Speaking Points

Topic: The Debate on the Future of Europe (Procedural/Substantive Issues)

a. Method - Procedures

- The method for conducting the debate relates to the substance and to the agenda of the debate on the "future of Europe".
- Our main objective must be to make the enlarged European Union more democratic and relevant to the European society and its citizens . To make it also more effective and capable of reaching decisions, shaping policy and playing a more coherent role in the international system [to turn the European Union into a Political Union] .
- The European society (pressure groups, NGO's, etc) must therefore be actively involved in the debate. We want a wide-ranging debate on the future of Europe, not only on procedural issues but also on the objectives and values of European integration.
- We can have a "three-stage approach" for the debate as suggested by R. Prodi: (a) an open reflection until the end of the current year, (b) a structured dialogue after the Laekken European Council, (c) a short IGC in 2004 (or earlier perhaps). It is important however to keep the momentum for the debate especially after the European Council of Laekken.
- The Convention we used for drafting the Charter for Fundamental Rights appears to be the right forum for conducting the structured dialogue. The Convention can be broadened to include some other actors (i.e. NGO's). The European Parliament and the European Commission must have a central role in the whole process . We reject the idea of a restricted group of wise men. We can have of course the required inputs from a group of experts on various technical issues.

- The year 2004 appears to be a difficult one for holding the new IGC (European elections, etc). We may consider bringing the IGC forward.

There must be the widest possible involvement of the countries negotiating for accession in the process.

[Greece tries to stimulate the debate by various means. To until now we have organized a number of closed seminars but also a series of Public events in which the Prime Minister C. Simitis and other political personalities have expressed their views on the future of Europe].

b. Substantive Issues

- We are ambitious for the new IGC. The "agenda of Nice" must be expanded to include in addition to the four items listed in Annex IV of the Nice Treaty:

- Horizontal allocation of competencies among the EU institutions (relations between Commission - Council - Parliament - European Council).

- The pillar structure of the European Union

- The democratic character of the European Union

- The external representation of the Union

- Qualified majority voting

- European defence / ESDP.

- The goal must be to foster the dynamic development of the enlarged EU, not its freezing.

- The European Union must progressively transform itself into a Political Union deriving its legitimacy directly from the European electorate. The federal model provides a good strategy for the future organization of the Union. We see federalism as a decentralizing system, not a centralized one.

- We must define in a clear way the values, principles and objectives that the union wants to serve in the 21st century. For us, these values are quite clear: democracy, solidarity, cohesion, social justice, stability.

- The delimitation of competencies of the Union must not lead either to denationalization of policies or to dilution of the "Union's acquis". Some competencies currently exercised by the member states must be transferred to the Union (i.e. foreign policy, defence policy). There is no need to draw a list of competencies to be inserted in the Treaty. We must define certain principles for the exercise of competencies.

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