

## Lyon 2006 - European Ideas Fair Speeches

European Ideas Fair

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Second Roundtable - *The European Agenda for Revival*

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Our continent has achieved great things and it would be wrong to think we can win people over if we only ever talk about failure. Nonetheless, we must recognise at the same time that we have two problems. Despite this great achievement - and enlargement, for example, really is a great achievement because it has extended the area of stability- even so, are we really adequately equipped to meet the challenges ahead, and is there sufficient awareness among politicians in the other Member States? Above all, is there awareness among citizens, whose support we need as we move forward?

In Berlin, we recently drew up a list of eight challenges facing Germany. In doing so, we recognised that even a relatively large nation-state like Germany can no longer respond adequately to seven of them - notably globalisation, the environment, combating terrorism, security policy, and various other issues that are likely to arise. There was only one point where we were not entirely sure whether we could still respond adequately at national level, namely mastering the demographic issue, and here too, there are justified doubts.

However, I am not sure whether there is any real awareness of this in political action. When I listen to some of the speeches being delivered at national level, I have my doubts. Europe faced a challenge with the Lebanon crisis, and the nation-states stumbled in. One day, I was watching French, British and German television. The foreign ministers of these three countries were all engaged in diplomatic visits at more or less the same time. Yet each country only reported about its own foreign minister, giving the impression that they would be the one to make the difference. These events are designed purely for home consumption. I would have preferred it if the three ministers had not undertaken separate missions and only one minister had made the journey, namely the European Foreign Minister, in order to make a real difference and show what José Manuel Barroso has described as Europe's strength. There are many examples which illustrate this point - that it is obviously still not enough to address the challenge genuinely with the necessary vigour from Brussels, and of course to do so via a meaningful combination of solidarity and social concern.

The second point concerns the 'new justification' that Europe needs, just as Angela Merkel has said - not a new foundation, but a new justification. We must recognise that for the older generation, there was a clear consensus that Europe safeguarded peace - whether or not people were annoyed by Brussels' decision-making. For the younger generation, however, this is no longer enough. The argument still holds good, but we must make it clear that we can only safeguard our opportunities in this globalised world if we work together. The issues of innovation and education are crucially important here, as is openness, which also means openness to new ideas, but security is important at the same time. Many people do not want to press ahead with more Europe, especially older people, because they ask: where is the safe haven in this globalisation? We must make this connection. It is a connection which only Europe can make, because the nation-state cannot provide the answer either. And we must link this with transparency and legitimacy. Efficiency alone is no longer enough to provide this new justification. So much is already being decided by and for Europe, and citizens cannot keep track.

So I think it is important for us to engage in a discussion about the new institutional arrangements at this point, but if our response simply means reverting to a technocratic approach and focusing on aspects such as the weighting of votes in the Council, how many Commissioners there are and so forth, or if this is the impression conveyed to citizens, it will not be enough. The citizens will simply say yet again that Europe is a mechanical process and is all about technocracy and is failing to reach out to citizens. I think the starting point can be found in the Constitutional Treaty: more rights for citizens, constitutional arrangements with the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the relationship between competences, the relationship between values in many areas, and when it comes to economic policy, the relationship between the market and social progress. The Constitutional Treaty attempts to find answers to all these questions. If we respond to the crisis that we are facing as a result of the referenda in France and the Netherlands by resorting to a technocratic approach and only adopting the regulations necessary for the EU to function, the citizens will finally abandon us.

Efficiency is key because success sweeps the citizens along in its wake. For this to be achieved, however, citizens must feel that they can understand who is responsible for what, and they must have a clear understanding of the aims and purposes. European politics must be integrated into a system of values, and I think that in all our discussions at the moment, this is something that we should not forget. So it is really not a matter of achieving a mini-treaty on Parts I and II; it is a matter of deciding how Parts I and II can be pushed through and what we can do with Part III, simply to come up with an idea. I do not know what will be possible next year, given that by the end of the German Presidency, we are supposed to be on track for a decision by 2008.

But let me voice a plea: as Christian Democrats, we should not pursue any course which lacks a system of values. I believe that would be contrary to our position and would be quite the wrong approach in terms of the benefits to citizens as well.

Let me make one further point very briefly: this Europe will either have an inner core of a few countries which establish a coalition, or it will have a constitutional Europe which provides cohesion for all 25 or 27 countries. I think we need to make it clear that while we should be looking ahead to enlargement and ensuring that there is a European perspective which gives impetus to domestic reform in other European countries, as this is strategically very important, nonetheless, an entity's strength is not only defined by size, but by its internal strength.

The population of the United States of America is just half that of the European Union, but the USA is much stronger because it has more robust internal foundations and a constitution. That is why the European Union's size is always a question of the relationship to its internal strength, which encompasses not only the institutional issues but also the citizens' awareness - in other words, the extent to which the European Union has legitimacy in the hearts and minds of its citizens. The question of legitimacy and the institutional issues - these two aspects together are what define the EU's strength. It is then a matter of deciding whether we merely associate this with external strength, but unless the conditions are in place - and this is the classic debate about enlargement and deepening - we will ultimately fail. Size does not define strength, and we should recognise this fact, for if we want to master the challenge ahead, we must have the internal strength necessary for the capacity to act, as well as legitimacy in the eyes of citizens.