



*Conference by Dr. Jorge Sampaio,
President of the Portuguese Republic,
at the invitation of the European Affairs
Committee of the Folketing*

"Shaping the future of an enlarged European Union"

Christiansborg, 28 June 2002

O Presidente da Republica

Deputy

Mr. President of the Folketing,

Mr. President of the European Affairs Committee,

Members of Parliament,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be at the Folketing, at the invitation of its European Affairs Committee, to speak about the future of Europe before an audience with such a high degree of knowledge and interest in the European construction process.

and responsibility

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your kind words, which honour both myself and the country I represent.

Even though they are both maritime countries, having experienced sporadic periods of more intense co-operation, Portugal and Denmark did not seem destined to have intimate relations. Nevertheless, today they are partners in a project for a common society in the framework of the European Union.

For different geo-strategic reasons and under different national circumstances, Denmark and Portugal joined this extraordinary adventure of European integration that began in the remote fifties with the birth of the European Coal and Steel Community.

The world of today has little or nothing in common with that time. I personally am convinced that in our global world, there are no credible alternatives to the processes of regional integration. Otherwise we run the risk of further compromising the exercise of national sovereignty and endangering the independence of our States and the security of our citizens.

For a better understanding of the history of European integration and a clearer, more rigorous perception of its present stage, I believe it is useful to recall briefly our reciprocal experiences of accession, which we rarely have the opportunity to compare. Therefore, I will dedicate some time to this comparison. I will then talk about the challenges of the next wave of enlargement and the opportunity for renewal offered by the forthcoming reunification of the European continent. Lastly, I will outline my vision of the future of an enlarged Europe.

Portugal and Denmark – two complementary experiences of European integration

Denmark joined what was then the European Economic Community in 1973, at the same time as the United Kingdom and Ireland. Its application was ^{in my view} basically motivated by the economic advantages that would be forthcoming following accession. The negative effect on EFTA of the United Kingdom's own accession to the EEC and the benefits for the Danish agricultural sector were particularly important considerations. The political dimension of European construction, which at the time was intensely discussed, was from the very first moment set aside, thus avoiding a debate that might have led to rejection of this accession, as was the case in Norway.

We are all aware that the first wave of enlargement of the EEC was a difficult process and occurred in a difficult historical context. Who can forget the troubled year of 1973, marked by the Yom Kippur war and the energy crisis in Europe? For the European project, the year was marked by the difficulties caused by the accession of the new members, by the failed attempts to strengthen political co-operation between the Nine and by the problems of a faltering European monetary system, then taking its first steps.

The following year, 1974, was also a year of great tension, with the Council being incapable of deciding on implementation of the first project of Economic and Monetary Union of the Community and the unheard of request by the United Kingdom to revise its conditions of accession. Nevertheless, important institutional decisions were taken in that year, such as the direct election of the European Parliament, from 1978 onwards, and the institutionalisation of the European Council.

Fundamentally, however, 1974 was a year when democracies flowered in Western Europe, with the Revolution of the Carnations in Portugal, the end of military dictatorship in Greece and the beginning of democratic transition in Spain.

In our case, it was the institutionalisation of a pluralist democracy that opened the doors to a Europe, from which we were barred. Although founding members of the OECD and of EFTA, like Denmark in fact, it was only at this point that we were able to request admission to the Council of Europe and, in 1977, to apply for accession to the European Economic Community.

Our accession to what was then the EEC enabled Portugal to consolidate its democratic transition, ^{to} strengthen the rule of law and ^{to} develop a market economy. The country opened up, developed and modernised, whilst the Portuguese regained their self-esteem, learned to value their history and their culture. Abroad, integration gave Portugal increased influence and prestige.

Contradicting the misgivings of some of the Community partners who feared that the Community's enlargement southwards would weaken and endanger the cohesion of the European space and the individual interests of its Member States, the accession of Portugal and Spain in 1986 was a complete success. Instead of becoming weaker Europe became stronger. Portugal's and Spain's contribution renewed Community dynamics in all fields.

I am deeply convinced that the accession of Greece, Portugal and Spain was decisive in ^{consolidating} ~~defining~~ a European identity synonymous with pluralist democracy, the rule of law and a market economy. This identity, in turn, was vital to guide the transition in eastern European countries, all of which converged towards democracy and a common European project.

I have a particular reason for recalling these moments in the history of European construction. It is hard to deny that the accession of our two countries was motivated by totally different reasons and that the expectations of the Portuguese and the Danes concerning the Community are not entirely the same!

In Portugal, no other issue achieved such consensus as that of European integration. In Denmark, on the contrary, the European issue has always caused great controversy, requiring compromises, even in the *Folketing*, which was never able to obtain a favourable majority of five-sixths of its members' votes, as required by its Constitution to ratify the European treaties, and had therefore to resort to referenda.

The Portuguese continue to consider Portugal's accession to Europe as essentially political. Because of European undertakings, we sometimes opted to alter our Constitution. For the Danes, the European option was guided by economic realism. Whenever European legislation went against the spirit or the letter of the Constitution the Danes chose to alter their Community obligations, claiming a special status and obtaining opt-outs.

This diversity in attitudes is only possible because from the very beginning European construction has been an open project achieved through negotiation and compromise, aiming more at Europe's integration than its unification. Diversity has not been an obstacle to the success of the European project.

To continue along this successful route, the conditions of this diversity need to be preserved, within the strict limits of a number of common values and principles that form the basis of the European project. But Europe is also an evolutionary project in a changing world. Therefore, we must also redefine, with rigor, clarity and determination, the objectives we are pursuing and what we collectively wish to make of Europe. These two requirements must be kept in mind if we want Europe to play an important role in the 21st century.

The imminent unification of the European continent

There is widespread awareness that we have reached a critical moment in European construction. On the one hand, the European Union is preparing for its biggest enlargement ever. On the other, it is intent on deepening its level of integration, becoming responsible for areas that hitherto had been within the purview of national sovereignties. I am thinking of foreign policy, defence and justice and internal affairs.

More than ever intense efforts must be made to mobilise national public opinion. A broad historic vision, practical sense, political intelligence and negotiating ability are essential.

If Member States as a whole and each one in particular do not renew their European commitment and their determination to apply, Europe-wide, the principles of solidarity and cohesion on which the European project is based, I am convinced that we will jeopardise not only the future of the European Union, which is our own future as well, but that of the entire European continent.

The European Union has taken shape like a Lego construction that children are so familiar with. It began as a project developed and nurtured by a generation who had experienced the horrors and inhumanity of the Second World War and who wished to reconcile peoples at odds with each other, encouraging them to participate in a common project aimed first and foremost at re-establishing peace, stability and prosperity. Europe was always, in fact, a project of peace, designed to make war impossible.

In half a century of existence, Europe has become a signal success, representing a major achievement of the 20th century. Targets were attained and goals reached, despite profound changes in the international context, like the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification, the end of the Eastern bloc and the cold war. This success was all the more remarkable because these changes coincided with a particularly critical stage of European construction designed to lead to full achievement of the internal market, to the application of the Single Act and to fulfilment of Economic and Monetary Union.

However, we are also aware that the story of its day-to-day construction is beset by situations of impasse, indecision, dispute and postponement, as a result of constant conciliation between national interests and the conflicts of power among its Member States.

During the first phase in the history of Europe (which I consider ends more or less with the Treaty of Maastricht and the achievement of Economic and Monetary Union), the success of European integration owed a lot to the solid Franco-German leadership, with the committed and timely assistance of the European Commission under the Presidency of Jacques Delors. When these actors of European construction retired and were replaced, it was the end of a cycle. This driving force was lost and it has never fully been recovered.

The challenges of the forthcoming enlargement are, in my view, a privileged occasion to relaunch the European dynamic. It is the greatest opportunity in its history. Firstly, because we will be given the opportunity to build a space of peace and stability and to develop on a European scale a model of society that is democratic, pluralist, open and imbued with solidarity. Secondly, because we will have the necessary dimension to become in the long run the most competitive economy in the world. Thirdly, because Europe will be acquiring sufficient weight and breadth to stand out as an important actor on the international stage and so become a world power.

Nevertheless, the forthcoming enlargement of the European Union also represents a powerful challenge that Europeans will have to face up to. Its very dimensions and complexity require determination, additional efforts of solidarity and certainly a few adjustments.

Firstly, because this enlargement embraces a large group of countries which endured more than forty years of totalitarian regimes, with low levels of development and an incipient degree of modernisation. Their integration means that, as in Portugal's case, they are committed to democratic values, national prosperity and modernity. If this integration fails we will no doubt cause a crisis of unforeseeable consequences.

Secondly, we will have to continue preserving the economic and social cohesion of the European space as a whole in order to guarantee a real convergence of our economies. In this particular area Portugal, like some of its current partners, still requires Community assistance to finalise the cycle of modernisation and development initiated on its accession. We will not win this battle without Community resources. And if we do not win the battle, the entire European space will be weakened.

Thirdly, we have to be prepared to face the new threats and problems arising from the negative effects of globalisation. Their solution depends either on a more coordinated approach or on the development of more common policies. I refer, for instance, to the fight against organised crime in all its forms – terrorism, money laundering, drug trafficking and traffic and exploitation of human beings; the need to preserve the environment and rationalise the use of natural resources; the fight against hunger and misery that affect increasingly wider fringes of the world population; the correction of growing inequalities of opportunities and development; or the need to guarantee conditions for sustainable development and world governance. In an enlarged Europe where disparities will grow exponentially and the interests at stake will be increasingly different, agreement within the Community will be a permanent challenge, requiring a greater spirit of compromise and a keener sense of the general interest.

To overcome all these challenges we must mobilise European public opinion, raising its awareness of our historic responsibility in reuniting Europe round a common project of democratic society, with a model of open citizenship and shared development. At a time of growing manifestations of xenophobia and intolerance we must eradicate the unfounded fears and concerns that cause the burden of all evils to fall on "the other", the foreigner, he who is different, alien or more fragile. We must develop a pedagogic approach to prevent our societies from shutting themselves off from the world and from developing archaic and isolationist tendencies that can only worsen the problems confronting them.

To ensure that the unification of Europe is the true foundation of the 21st century we must guarantee the success of enlargement. We must unhesitatingly assume our individual and collective responsibility for this community that is Europe with its shared destiny and shared values.

My view of an enlarged Europe

When considering the difficulties of European construction, what at first sight might appear to be its paradoxical nature, and the ambition that spurs us on, I often think of one particular Danish physicist and thinker. I refer to Niels Bohr and his invention of the principle of complementarity as a cornerstone of the logical foundations of quantum physics. This principle enables us to accept the duality of the profound nature of physical reality, so that the models that describe it must not eliminate this duality but merely explain how it is manifested.

I consider that the principle of complementarity can serve as a metaphor to help us overcome the conceptual difficulties of the European integration process, compelling us to seek a more flexible and innovative model that takes into account its paradoxical reality.

In fact, the difficulty of deepening European construction is precisely how to reinforce the complementarity between two realities that should in principle and from the start be contradictory. This root duality is indeed present at various levels and in various areas of the European project, namely its foundations (co-existence of Nation States and supranational organs of a federative nature); in institutional terms (Council and Commission), methodological terms (the logic of intergovernmental co-operation and the logic of integration) or even strategic terms (enlargement and deepening).

In this respect we must immediately eliminate all proposals for deepening that do not take the dual nature of European construction properly into account, whether they are models of intergovernmental co-operation on the lines of a "free trade area", or classic types of federal integration models that do not fulfil the requirement of complementarity.

On the contrary, I believe that the institutional reform we are committed to carrying out must respect the specificities of the current system and be guided by at least three objectives:

- fill in all lacunae and deficiencies identified. I am referring to increasing the political component of the Union, its organics and its underlying democratic legitimacy; and also to strengthening the principle of equality among States and the conditions for implementing it.
- adapt its functioning to the future dimensions of an enlarged Union. I am referring to essential functional changes, some of which were decided in Seville, but also to the need to define the conditions designed to preserve flexibility without compromising the unity of the European project;
- give the Union the added capacities needed to take on new functions and skills, linked in particular to greater co-ordination of economic policies, a European foreign and defence policy or common justice and internal affairs policies.

The European Union agenda is already overloaded with enlargement, the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) and the preparation of financial perspectives post-2006. The Union must therefore proceed with caution regarding proposed reforms attempting a radical change of the European architecture that might endanger its foundations and principles.

This pragmatic and realistic approach to deepen the political union that we wish to achieve in the short term is prompted by a sense of history, not by lack of ambition. Pragmatism and realism cannot, however, mean an absence of clear purposes and political will which are urgently needed in view of the difficult and complex times we are living.

I believe that the ambition that drives us must be reflected on a text of constitutional character which I hope will emerge from the IGC. It should contain a strategic vision of the European Union for the next twenty-five years and specify its objectives and purposes. The text should also clearly, unequivocally and intelligibly describe the foundations, values and principles of Europe and specify the rights and duties of Europeans as citizens of Europe.

Within the scope of the political deepening of the Union I believe it is essential to guarantee the principle of equality between the Member States and to create functional and institutional conditions to ensure parity of treatment between States. I consider that this is a serious problem that has grown worse in recent times. I have no doubt that the solution lies first of all in restoring the mutual trust between States, but also in correcting the imbalances introduced by the Treaty of Nice.

Citizens must feel that they are represented in the European institutions and each State must preserve in full its capacity to participate in the mechanisms of decision-making and control. It is for this reason that I have suggested more than once that we should consider creating a new chamber, like a Senate, on the basis of available federalist experiences that all rely on a bicameral legislative body to safeguard the principle of equality between States. Time will tell if it will be possible to embark on this course at this moment.

At the same time, other paths should be explored. These include strengthening the Commission and reforming the Council and its various formations, that is, the European Council, the General Affairs Council and all the sectoral councils. In this context we should be careful in the way we treat the topical issue of the rotating presidencies of the European Union, because it is an important expression of equality between Member States, with great symbolic value as a link to bring the citizens of the Union closer together.

And here I would like to return to this aspect of citizens' relations with the Union. In the first place to evoke the issue of Europe's democratic legitimacy, and in the second to launch an appeal for the creation of a European public space.

European legitimacy is based on two things: its peoples are represented in the European Parliament which is elected by direct universal vote; its States are represented by the members of each national government who have a seat on the European Council and on the various other councils. National parliaments are then responsible for appropriate democratic control of the decisions taken by their respective governments at European level.

We could obviously think about improving the current system. The Commission, for example, could be given more political responsibility. The European Parliament, its means of election and its competences, could also be redesigned. Entrusting the control of the application of the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality to a political or jurisdictional body would lead to greater transparency and increased democratic legitimacy.

Nevertheless I believe that the problem of the democratic deficit lies first and foremost at the level of national parliaments, which as a rule do not monitor and control European issues and decisions with sufficient rigor. If this situation is not addressed within each Member State, changes at Community level will never suffice.

I would sincerely like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the *Folketing*. I believe that it constitutes a rare case in Europe, carrying out an exemplary work on behalf of transparency and consolidation of the democratic legitimacy of Europe vis-à-vis its citizens, in this case the Danes.

I do believe, in fact, that if we wish to anchor European construction to collective reference frameworks so that its citizens become accustomed to thinking on a European scale and to bring up European subjects in their political debates, it is absolutely vital to create a public European space and the best way to do this is to start from the base. And the base of representative democracy is unquestionably the national parliaments.

They therefore have a decisive and fundamental role to play in creating a public European space for a thriving participative European democracy. As European citizens, however, it is our duty to endorse Europe and make sure that its daily life is a space of open, inclusive and civically responsible citizenship. This is the appeal I would like to make.

Thank you very much for your attention.