

Gothenburg European Council (15-16 June 2001)

Presidency Conclusions

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I. The Future of Europe

3. Enlargement and globalisation present the European Union with great opportunities and challenges. With the open debate on the future of the Union, preparations are under way for an Intergovernmental Conference in 2004. Together with ongoing efforts to reform and modernise structures and working methods, this will serve to adapt the Union's founding Treaties and its institutions to new realities and to the demands of its citizens.

4. The ratification process for the Treaty of Nice will continue so that the Union is in a position to welcome new Member States from the end of 2002. In respect of the Irish referendum, the European Council confirms the conclusions adopted by the General Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 11 June, including willingness to contribute in every possible way to helping the Irish government find a way forward. It reaffirms its commitment to enlargement and to sustaining the good progress in the accession negotiations.

Enlargement

5. Significant breakthroughs have been achieved in the accession negotiations under the Swedish Presidency. Determined efforts by all parties have made it possible to meet and surpass the objectives set out at Nice for the first half of 2001.

6. The Council conclusions of 11 June detail the substantial results achieved in a number of key areas. Candidate countries have made impressive progress in meeting the accession criteria. More than two thirds of the negotiating chapters have been provisionally closed with some candidate countries. All negotiating chapters will be opened before the end of June with some of the candidate countries that started negotiations only last year. The road map has proved to be an ambitious and realistic framework for the negotiations. During the incoming Belgian and Spanish Presidencies the European Union will pursue the road map with undiminished vigour.

7. This new momentum must be matched by continued progress in the candidate countries in transposing, implementing and enforcing the acquis. They will have to pay particular attention to putting in place adequate administrative structures, to reforming judicial systems and the civil service, as well as to the situation of minorities. Special efforts will be devoted to assisting Bulgaria and Romania.

8. Candidate countries will continue to be judged solely on their own merits. The principle of differentiation applies. This allows the best prepared countries to progress more quickly in the negotiations, and other candidates to catch up. Agreements – even partial – reached during the course of the negotiations may not be considered final until an overall agreement has been established.

9. The enlargement process is irreversible. Based on the progress achieved so far, the European Council reaffirms the road map as the framework for the successful completion of the enlargement negotiations. Provided that progress towards meeting the accession criteria continues at an unabated pace, the road map should make it possible to complete negotiations by the end of 2002 for those candidate countries that are ready. The objective is that they should participate in the European Parliament elections of 2004 as members.

10. The decisions in Helsinki have brought Turkey closer to the EU and opened up new prospects for her European aspirations. Good progress has been made in implementing the pre-accession strategy for Turkey, including an enhanced political dialogue. The presentation by Turkey of its National Programme for adopting the acquis is a welcome development. However, in a number of areas such as human rights, further progress is needed. Turkey is urged to take concrete measures to implement the priorities of the Accession Partnership which is the cornerstone of the pre-accession strategy. The Council is invited to adopt the single financial framework for pre-accession assistance to Turkey by the end of the year at the latest. The economic programme agreed with the IMF must be vigorously implemented to create the conditions for economic recovery.

11. Taking account of their particular situations, candidate countries are invited to translate the Union's economic, social and environmental objectives into their national policies. The intention of candidate countries to adopt the eEurope+ initiative is a successful example. Starting from Spring 2003, the Commission will begin covering the candidate countries and their national policies in its annual synthesis report.

12. The European Council notes that the Commission, in line with the Nice conclusions, will shortly present a communication on the question of the frontier regions in order to strengthen their economic competitiveness.

The European Conference

13. The European Conference will convene in its current composition under the Belgian Presidency. With a view to strengthening the Union's partnership with Ukraine and Moldova, they will subsequently be invited to join the Conference.

Cooperation with Ukraine

14. Stable and positive political and economic development in Ukraine is of strategic importance for Europe. The Union acknowledges Ukraine's European aspirations and will continue to support democratic development, human rights, the rule of law and market-oriented economic reforms. The forthcoming visit by the President of the European Council is a manifestation of this support.

Debate on the future of the Union

15. The open debate on the future development of the European Union was launched on 7 March. The Presidency report gives an account of the many encouraging initiatives which have been undertaken since then. This debate, involving all parts of society, must be actively pursued over the coming years. As part of the preparation for the 2004 Intergovernmental Conference, Member States and candidate countries are invited to summarise the debate at national level and report to successive incoming Presidencies. Reflections on how to structure the preparatory phase for the 2004 IGC and broaden participation in that work, including the possible creation of an open forum, will continue up to the Laeken European Council.

Modernising the Institutions

16. The Union must be served by modern, open and citizen-oriented institutions. Reforms under way in all of the Union's institutions underscore their commitment to this objective. The new rules on the public's right of access to documents are a major step in making the Union more open.

17. As evidenced by the Secretary-General's report, additional reforms of the Council's structures and working methods are necessary. The Secretary-General will present, preferably to the Laeken European Council, detailed suggestions for further action to ensure an effective Council, based on better preparation of Council meetings, effective coordination between different Council formations and more efficient working methods after enlargement so that the European Council can take the necessary decisions by June 2002.

18. The budgetary process and implementation and control of the budget must be brought in line with modern European standards. The recast financial regulation should be adopted before the end of 2002.

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