

KEYNOTE SPEECHES

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Deputy Director General, DG Employment and Social Affairs,
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Outline of the EU Enlargement Social Policy

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Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

This conference of the Union of Baltic Cities, is both symbolic and pertinent. Symbolic and pertinent, because it is a sign of a growing inter-dependence between the countries, regions and local communities around these northern waters. Ever since the first settlers came to these shores, well before our era, followed by the Vikings, who criss-crossed the Baltic during the times of Orm the Red, and later by the Hanseatic merchants who created the first Single Market in the area, the Baltic Sea has oscillated between a waterway which unites, and which divides.

Now, at the beginning of the third millennium, we finally look at the prospect of the Baltic Sea becoming a domestic lake within a wider economic, social and political entity: the enlarged European Union. The countries and cities around this lake will be united and collaborate in a common struggle for peace, democracy, economic prosperity, freedom of opportunity and social justice.

The enlargement process

Enlargement presents some daunting prospects for all of us. It offers the prospect of uniting the European continent on the basis of shared ideals and agreed common values. Potentially, it could increase the population of the European Union from 375 million to 550 million people, and the number of Member States from 15 to 27 or more.

To the extent that the strategy for accession, designed at the European Councils of Luxembourg, Helsinki and Nice is effectively pursued, and that the candidate countries continue their preparations for membership, this means that negotiations could be concluded in 2002 with those candidates who fulfil the accession criteria.

The negotiations are being undertaken with each of the candidate countries bilaterally across 30 "chapters" or areas covering the EU treaties and legislation (the so called "acquis"). The majority of chapters were opened, and about half have been closed - i.e. a text has been prepared for final adoption. The negotiations are proceeding well and, in particular during the Swedish Presidency, much progress was achieved with most of the Candidate Countries. Some difficult areas, however, remain, such as agricultural and regional policy.

What is then at stake for the Candidate countries? Well, let me first say, that the negotiations for enlargement, are not negotiations in the classic sense of the term. The accession is based on the presumption that the candidate country has expressed the wish to join, and that they accepts the principles and values which underpin the Union. As Commissioner Diamontopoulou is fond of saying, an application to join reflects a political commitment to develop your economic future alongside ours, and to develop your societies along similar lines.

These principles - the economic, social, legal and political achievements, as well as the existing institutions - must be accepted as they are: no more, no less. They are not negotiable.

What is at stake in the negotiations is, rather:

- Whether there is a common understanding of what the EU's "acquis" means
- Whether there can, in some particular and exceptional circumstances, be any transitional periods in adopting and implementing the Community legislation;
- Whether the institutions in the candidate countries are ready to implement Community legislation and benefit from the EU financial support;
- How the European Union best can support the candidate countries to meet these challenges.

In fact, in the process of enlargement, in the past and in the future, from the EEC of 6 to 7 to 12, to 15 and eventually to 27 and beyond, there has always been - and continues to be - three building blocks, where governments and other actors, such as the regional and local decision makers, social partners and the civil society all have crucial responsibilities to contribute:

- Firstly, there is the endeavour to construct functioning market economies, which are based on the rule of law and equal opportunity, societies where an equilibrium has been found between checks and balances of democratic institutions, and rights and responsibilities of the citizens, societies also where the middle way has been found between crippling central planning and unfettered capitalism.
- Secondly, there is the institutional and political preparation for accession to full membership, which requires a capacity to generate competitive products and services, but also a capacity to apply the full range of social and economic legislation which it has taken the current members decades to develop.
- Thirdly, there is the need to develop the capacity and willingness to fully contribute to the constant further development of the Union, which is under continuous pressure to modernise itself and provide new answers to the emerging social and economic challenges, in order to become the most dynamic and innovative entity in the world.

For the current candidate countries, simultaneous efforts are required to complete all three building blocks. The European Union institutions are committed to assist the candidate countries in various ways in this endeavour, sometimes with the contribution from other international bodies and organisations.

Let me emphasise that the issue is not only to accept and to generate the capacity to implement the EU legislation as it is today. The challenge is to keep pace – like jumping on to a moving train, which is heading towards a moving target. In Europe, nothing is ever finalised or complete. Priorities and objectives change all the time. Frontiers and positions continue to move forward. So we all must be flexible and adaptable enough to adjust to ever changing challenges, ever increasing ambitions.

Challenges to economic and social cohesion

But there are not only challenges for the Candidate countries. There are formidable challenges for the current EU 15 member states also. And there are challenges which are shared among the current member states, and the new prospective members, alike. If all the actual candidate countries were to become members tomorrow, the population of the EU 27 would be one third bigger, the area about one quarter larger. However, economic and social disparities - in terms of productivity, GDP per head and living standards – would increase substantially.

So some tough questions are beginning to emerge as to how the European Union will be able to guarantee a balanced development, and how to ensure the achievement of economic and social cohesion – one of the key objectives underpinning EU policy making.

One of the key responses to these questions lies in our capacity to continue building the European Social Model.

The European Social Model

What is the basis of this European Social Model, and what is at stake here for the EU 15, and for the candidate countries?

Despite our apparent diversity, there are some values which all Europeans share, and which make our way of life different from what you find elsewhere in the world. These values cover the quest for economic prosperity - which should be linked with democracy and participation; the search for consensus; solidarity with the weakest members; equal opportunities for all; respect for human and labour rights; and the conviction that earning one's living through work is the basis upon which social welfare should be built.

These principles could be defined as the 'European Social Model'. The individual Member States of the Union have a certain degree of freedom to find the means to implement this model, but its main principles reflect shared 'common concerns'.

In this context we must bear in mind the basic objective of the construction of the European Union that we have been witnessing over the five last decades. It is in essence a huge peace programme, where the founding fathers were guided by the conviction that lasting peace in Europe could be reached by moving the means of production under supra-national control.

It was therefore upon the European Coal and Steel Union, that the Economic union was built. But beyond achieving peace through economic co-operation, social peace was to be "bought" through massive support for social restructuring of the coal and steel sectors.

So since the beginning the social dimension has accompanied the economic dimension. "Si vis pacem, cole justitiam" (if you want peace, cultivate justice) has been one of the principles upon which the EU has been built.

In the early days, the social dimension basically covered efforts to improve the living and working conditions of workers in order to facilitate the free movement of labour and to support thereby the creation of a single European Market. But over the years, as the economic dimension of the Europe has taken shape and the construction of the "Economic Union" has been completed, the "social dimension" of the European Union has been strengthened.

The culmination of this evolution can be seen in two major factors: on the one hand the adoption of the Charter of Fundamental Human Rights, which despite its non-binding constitutional character, in fact codifies the key principles of the European Social Model. On the other hand, the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council in March 2000 has created a new framework for the implementation of the European Social Policy.

These conclusions set out to make *"Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world capable of sustained economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion"*.

The objective of 'full employment' is the centrepiece, and the central outcome of this broad objective. Full employment is an important principle - an expression of a commitment to not let down anyone who wishes to offer his or her labour for the well-being of society.

The broad objective of Lisbon, which I referred to above, cannot be reached unless the three policy axis of economic policy, employment policy and social inclusion policy interact, and work together, in

a mutually supportive fashion. In this sense, the Union has reached a synergy between the economic, employment and social dimension of the vision of its Founding Fathers.

The European Social Agenda, launched by the Commission in June 2000, brings together the various initiatives and policy strands in the area of social policy. It is a large work programme, providing a comprehensive and coherent approach for the EU to confront the new challenges to social policy which result from the radical transformation of Europe's economy and society. This is particularly the case for the changes engendered by the new knowledge-driven economy, which affects the working and personal life of all people living in Europe, but also provides tremendous opportunities.

In order to seize these opportunities, a guiding principle of the new Social Policy Agenda will be to strengthen the role of social policy as a productive factor. A key dimension of this must be the notion of quality. First and foremost, the quality of jobs. We must not only promote more jobs, but also better jobs. However, beyond that, we need better social protection, higher quality social services, better governance.

Our starting-point is that social policies are vital for greater and more widely shared prosperity. Candidate countries are expected to adhere to the fundamental values which underpin the European Union, including the principles linked to the European Social Model. Compliance with EU rules and standards will in some cases be costly. And we must be frank in acknowledging that the primary responsibility rests with the candidate countries themselves.

That is why the message for the candidate countries should be that meeting the political, economic and social conditions of membership of the European Union is also the key to drawing the respective benefits of this membership.

That is why the social acquires is just as important as the economic acquires in the accession process. It is important as it will demonstrate to the citizens of the applicant countries that the Union is a driving force for improving the quality of economic and social life and raising the standard of living for all.

Let me be clear about this. The European social model is not a barrier to economic objectives. It is not an obstacle to the work of building an open and dynamic market economy. It is an important part of the solution. It contributes to strong economic performance. In the European social model, social policy is also good economic policy:

- It is about minimum standards for working life, including on health and safety at work and balancing flexibility for companies with security for employees.
- It is about employment policy, including creating the conditions for companies to adjust to change, for investment in new skills, and for protecting the vulnerable from the effects of restructuring.
- It is about equal opportunities for women and men and for minorities, in the workplace, but also in wider society. It is about minimum standards in civil society, including equality and democratic and social rights.

Partnership is a keyword of the European Social Model - involving many different actors at many levels: social partners as well as civil society. Partnership at the local and regional level is a particularly important building block in the development of the European employment strategy, with the mobilisation of local actors as the *sine qua non* for the successful implementation of employment policies.

We all know that local actors, municipalities and cities have widely differing capacities, sizes and competences across Europe.

But, even where local authorities have no formal competence with regards to employment, local public pressure has pushed them into taking action, and developing a new role, in providing a strategic approach - based on forging partnerships, and facilitating the development of new initiatives.

Local partnerships involve the active participation of business, of the social economy, social partners and local public employment services. They all come together to contribute towards a sustainable local strategy.

It is ultimately at the local level that education and training are organised, developed and delivered. It is at the local level where entrepreneurs and companies tackle restructuring and create the demand for goods and services and create the jobs needed to achieve our goals of full employment. It is at the local level where national economic and social objectives and responsibilities are met. And it is at the local level that services are provided for enhancing integration of the most vulnerable groups of our societies.

It is for this reason that the European Employment Strategy, in the Employment Guidelines, have devoted an increasing interest to the role of local action for employment. The call for greater involvement and responsibility for the local actors has been continuously strengthened. To support this development, the Commission has launched an important policy initiative – backed up by two Communications, a wide-ranging public consultation, and networking and budgetary support - intended to mobilise local actors in coherent development strategies.

In particular, the local actors are invited to develop Local Action Plans for employment. These plans aim to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the local community, its constraints, and its linkages with the wider world. They set out a process whereby the various actors and stakeholders can interact in partnership, and can build a sustained structure for the implementation of the European Employment Strategy at the local level.

Cities, like the Baltic cities, can play an important role in fostering development at the local level. As an example, three Baltic border regions have already started a transnational exchange of good practice in developing local employment strategies and partnerships for employment – funded through a Community project.

In the employment and social field, the social partners play a particularly important role. At Union level, the social dialogue brings European employer and Trade Union organisations together, as independent actors, to do three things: to discuss joint action, to negotiate, and to help develop the work of the EU institutions. This is a lively process, at European level, just as it is at national, sectoral and workplace levels.

The Amsterdam Treaty reinforced further the role of the social partners. The social partners now have the power to conclude agreements at Community level. Candidate countries must therefore ensure that social dialogue is given the importance it merits, and that they foster strong social partners capable of playing a useful part in all levels of social dialogue, from intermediate to national to Community levels.

This brings me to the final part of my intervention, where I would like to examine briefly how we, in partnership, can assist candidate countries in their quest for accession:

EU support for accession

When the EU launched the enlargement process in Luxembourg in December 1997, the Member States realised that, for enlargement to take place under optimum conditions, significant assistance to the candidate countries would already be needed in the pre-accession phase.

Accession partnerships and increased pre-accession aid have provided the means to construct and facilitate the enlargement process. With support taking the form of measures to promote employment, institution building, improving social dialogue mechanisms, health related programmes, strengthening health and safety standards, and much more.

In the area of employment and social policy, total financial assistance provided through Phare amounted to 175m EURO for the two years 1998 and 1999 and overall pre-accession assistance for the period 2000 – 2006 amounts for the accession countries to more than 3 billion Euro per year.

Twinning arrangements, with Member States experts seconded to candidate countries administrations have helped them strengthen their capacity to adopt and implement the acquis. And the EU has also recognised the value to candidate countries of participating in ongoing Community programmes with part of countries' Phare allocation being available to part-fund participation.

So substantial support is available. However EU support cannot and will not replace efforts by candidate countries themselves - efforts which must be made sufficiently in advance to ensure that, by the time of accession, compliance with and implementation of the acquis is assured.

And even more importantly, ensuring that enlargement is first and foremost about the practical impact on ordinary peoples' lives. Nowhere is this more evident than in the employment and social policy areas. By accepting and implementing the social acquis, candidate countries are subscribing to this European model.

Conclusions

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me end my message with three keywords on what the future of Europe really is about. It is about Faith, Hope and Love:

We have to have Faith that the road that we have chosen is the right one and that this road will lead us to full employment within an economic area which is the most competitive, innovative and dynamic in the world. But it does not come about by itself, without our joint and consistent efforts, and without continuous modernisation of our employment systems so that they can adjust to the needs of the new economy.

We also need Hope, hope that our leaders have the vision and courage to reform our institutions so that indeed can operate efficiently in a wider Europe, and that they can react quickly and effectively to shocks and emerging challenges. We must help them to take the right decisions, even when they are difficult and painful.

Ultimately, and most importantly however, we need Love. We must feel love for our values, the values of equal opportunity, solidarity, inclusion and social justice, upon which the European Union is built. Values which make our continent, with all its diversity, so special. And which distinguishes it from so many other places in the world.

Without these values, Europe would not be worthwhile to construct. Let us therefore work together so that these values can be maintained and further strengthened in the ever changing world.

Thank you for your attention.

Non-Governmental Perspective of the EU Accession

Prof. Dr. Georg Cremer

Secretary General of Caritas Germany

I am asked to present a short note on the EU accession from a non-governmental perspective. I will concentrate on non-governmental organisations active in the field of social services and lobbying for patients, for handicapped, for poor people, and for people in need in general.

A short word on welfare organisations in Germany: There is a long tradition of co-operation between welfare organisations and the State on all levels, the federal level, the Länder and the municipalities. In Germany, we rely on the principle of subsidiarity. The State is not active in offering social services as long as there are welfare organisations (or, since recent years, also private enterprises) which are willing and able to fulfil this task. The principle of subsidiarity became strong after World War I when the State was not in a position to care for people in need. Caritas, the welfare organisation of the Catholic Church, Diakonia, the welfare organisation of the Protestant Church, the Red Cross, and Arbeiterwohlfahrt, the welfare organisation close to the trade union movement, and other non-governmental welfare organisations are the backbone of the system of social services in Germany. They offer a variety of social services: hospitals, homes and home care services for elderly people, for handicapped people, counselling services and professional training. Already in the past, people in Germany had a choice when in need for social service: they were able to decide whether they prefer Caritas or any other welfare organisation, therefore they also had some power as customers. In case they were not satisfied with the service offered by one of the welfare organisations they could switch to another organisation. Therefore, a certain amount of pressure for quality is part of the system. These welfare organisations act on their own responsibility, based on their specific values. Caritas is based on the values of the Catholic Church, charity being an integral part of Church life. Other welfare organisations also have their special set of values on which they base their work. They all link social services to the community and integrate the work of volunteers. Welfare organisations are not just assignment takers of the State and they are not just looking for funds from the State or from the European Commission, but do their work in their own responsibility.

Two words on Europe, first on the common market. The common market will have important impacts on social services, in Germany and in the accession countries. There is some fear (maybe too much fear) inside the welfare organisations regarding the Common Market. We face increasing competition between welfare organisations and private enterprises. However, this process is not mainly caused by the European Commission, but is pushed by political developments inside Germany. We do not need harmonisation of social services. By what systems social services are supported by the State should be decided by authorities of the individual member countries. Certainly, the common market needs common rules, the freedom of movement for example. The freedom of movement must be accompanied by the right to gain access to social services in other countries. It is the job of the Commission to make sure that these common rules are not bypassed by governments of the member countries for protection reasons. In Germany, we are presently engaged in a heated discussion on services of general interest (in German we call it Daseinsvorsorge). The welfare organisations are discussing what rules are necessary to be able to offer high quality social services. There are some aspects which are very important from a non-governmental point of view: It must be possible for welfare organisations to continue to integrate volunteers into their services, and often they require some sort of support for this. Furthermore, welfare organisations must defend the privilege to collect private donations and the right of donators to obtain a tax privilege (reducing the donation from their taxable income). Funding of non-governmental organisations by private donations is a much better way of funding them than by way of State subsidies or subsidies from the European Union. It forces

non-governmental organisations to seek support from society. And of course, we need transfer systems for social services, and I would assume that also the Commission will not deny that. Some problems might arise when welfare organisations seek subsidies for certain activities in a field where there is competition from private enterprises. Let me give you an example: A Church related organisation founds a small enterprise, not for profit but in order to integrate long-term unemployed with low professional qualification. To be able to do this they obtain some subsidies from the State. The former unemployed now produce goods or services also offered by private enterprises. Private competitors are trying to use the European law to reduce these subsidies. And of course, this very important work of integrating long-term unemployed could not be continued if the subsidies were stopped. I think it is in line with the idea of a common market that these subsidies are given for social activities not offered by private enterprises or for services in rural areas, or for certain other services that require special support.

Now an additional word on co-operation with the accession countries in Eastern Europe: It is not enough to promote integration and social cohesion on a high political level only, it has to be promoted by non-governmental organisations as well. Caritas and other welfare organisations have their European networks. Let me concentrate on Caritas. Caritas work in Central and Eastern Europe was very restricted or non-existing under communist rule. It has been built up again for more than 10 years now. Caritas organisations are looking for the role they can play in the welfare sector of their countries. In doing so, they look on other non-governmental welfare organisations in Europe. It might be going too far in saying that the welfare services in Germany have served as a model for Eastern Europe. However, the German idea of subsidiarity was very attractive for welfare organisations in Central and Eastern Europe. One example of what Caritas did: Home care services for elderly and sick people are very important, because they answer to some present problems. We face ageing societies in Western and Eastern Europe, we face a decreasing role of families due to higher professional mobility, we face a high degree of individualisation in society. And we are confronted with a welfare sector in Eastern Europe which was very much based on hospitalisation of patients, causing a huge financial burden for communities. Therefore, Caritas Germany and Caritas organisations in the accession countries co-operated to promote home care services for elderly or sick people. In Poland there is very successful co-operation between municipalities and local caritas organisations; the municipalities are prepared to fund the salaries of the nurses who work in home care services, the local caritas organisations run the services Caritas Germany and the German government supported by investment. But finances are not the only form of co-operation, a dialog on concepts for home care services and professional training are part of it. In the long run, success will depend on social policies of the governments of the accession countries. These home care services will only survive if some form of transfer mechanism (for example via the health insurance system) will emerge by which services for people in need will be funded. Caritas organisations are now involved in discussing these mechanisms. Caritas organisations also try to integrate volunteers in these services and to promote integration of elderly people or handicapped in their neighbourhood. Under communist rule, voluntary work was misused to a certain extent and now it is very difficult to win volunteers back, even inside Church settings. And of course, professional training is required; this is an important area in which welfare organisations from member and accession countries can co-operate. This co-operation is one element of many endeavours to bring Europe together.

Gender Equality and the EU Enlargement

Dr. Giedre Purvaneckiene

Member of the Parliament, Republic of Lithuania

Mr. President, Distinguished Mayors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to address this audience. It is too short time to make explicit analysis on the topic "Gender Equality and EU Enlargement" therefore I will touch only upon some topics important from the perspective of countries around the Baltic Sea, candidates to the EU. And I will use the examples from my own country, Lithuania.

In negotiations on assessment to EU gender equality issues as a rule do not make big problems for countries candidates. I never heard that any country had asked for any transition period concerning gender issues. Achievements of the candidate countries in the field of gender equality usually are evaluated by EU experts as very good. For example, I will quote 2000 Regular Report of European Commission on Lithuania.

Gender equality issues are mentioned two times:

1. "The level of Lithuania's alignment with the *acquis* in the field of social policy and employment varies across sectors. In particular, while **this level is good in the area of equality of treatment, ...**"
2. "In the field of equal treatment for women and men, Lithuanian legislation is **substantially in line with the *acquis***."

The main provisions still to be introduced regard the:

- 1. shift in the burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex and**
- 2. the introduction of a definition of indirect discrimination.**

The Ombudsman Office has proved to be effective in enhancing the implementation of equal treatment."

So, it seems that there are almost no problems in gender equality. But I would like to draw your attention to two facts connected with the statements in the report: The first fact is connected with legislation. Post-communist countries inherited legislation theoretically based on gender equality. But the majority of us are aware that gender equality did not exist in real life, so I will not discuss this. Therefore, there are no problems for our countries to adjust legislation to EU requirements concerning gender equality. Moreover, legislation of candidate countries sometimes is even more advanced than in EU member countries. For example, in Lithuania we have great achievements in this field. In 1998, the Law on Equal Opportunities was passed, and came in force on the 1st of March 1999. Following the law the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman was appointed, and the office was established. We have the national machinery for equal opportunities, we had action plans on the implementation of equal opportunities. Those are great achievements. But did they cause deep changes in our societies?... I will be back to this question but now I would like to speak about another fact, connected with conclusions of earlier mentioned report of European Commission.

There were two provisions to be introduced in Lithuania: "shift in the burden of proof in cases of discrimination, and the introduction of a definition of indirect discrimination".

If we ask how many Lithuanians know what does it mean, the answer would be that there are only few people (you can count them on the fingers): some officials in the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, and few leaders of women's NGOs. This applies not only to these to provisions. In my discussions with politicians, officials and with public in general, I

noticed that nobody makes distinction between “equal pay for equal work” and “equal pay for work of equal value”. Even in the discussions and negotiations with EU officials, Lithuanians have different things in mind. When speaking about “work of equal value” they have in mind “equal work”.

And now, in connection with time restrictions, I have to return to the main problems of countries candidates regarding gender equality. There are plenty of them but I will name only few, which seem to me the most important:

- Patriarchal attitudes and traditional gender stereotypes still prevail in our societies. This is confirmed by many attitudinal surveys. Therefore achievements in gender equality equal treatment or equal opportunities are not sustainable. For example, the last elections to the Sejm (Parliament) and to the municipality boards showed the decrease in numbers of elected women. Moreover, on the state’s level every new government, formed after elections, in the beginning of it’s work cuts positions and programs connected with gender equality, and it always takes time to rebuild the national machinery and programs. On the level of municipality, every new election brings new people, who are usually not aware of gender issues, so it’s again long time to sensitise them in gender issues.

- The most painful problem regarding gender equality in candidate countries probably is family violence, mainly male violence against women. The level of this violence is very high: victimological survey showed that 42,6% of currently married or living with partner women experienced violence by their husbands or partners at least once in their lives (to compare e.g. with 25% in Finland). There are almost no achievements in this field. The main obstacle are patriarchal attitudes, particularly those connected with privacy of family matters. Moreover, privacy of family matters is introduced as “Western value” contra communist values. Even when discussing problems of violence against children in families, the question of family privacy is being raised.

- Another important problem connected with gender equality is women’s political participation. In Lithuania at present there are only 10,6% of women in the Parliament, and 17% in municipality boards. But even bigger problem is that in the last elections there was substantial decrease in numbers of elected women. Due to the time shortage I can not explore on the reasons of this phenomenon, but it should be stressed that women do not make substantial influence neither on state nor on municipality policies. In Social Charter to be adopted tomorrow there is provision on gender mainstreaming. I am sure unfortunately that without “critical mass” of women in municipality boards implementation of gender mainstreaming is not achievable.

In conclusion I wish to appeal to politicians of municipalities of the EU members countries not to forget gender equality issues in direct contacts or common programs with municipalities of the candidate countries. It is extremely important on municipality level because in municipalities of our countries gender equality is not regarded as a problem or a topic for discussions.

Thank you for your attention.