

Statement made by Jacques Santer to the European Parliament on EU enlargement (2 March 1995)

Caption: On 2 March 1995, Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission, delivers an address to the European Parliament in which he identifies the problems involved in the enlargement of the European Union to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEECs).

Source: Debates of the European Parliament. Report of proceedings. 02.03.1995, No 4-458. Luxembourg: Official Journal of the European Communities.

Copyright: All rights of reproduction, public communication, adaptation, distribution or dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

The documents available on this Web site are the exclusive property of their authors or right holders.

Requests for authorisation are to be addressed to the authors or right holders concerned.

Further information may be obtained by referring to the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/statement_made_by_jacques_santer_to_the_european_parliament_on_eu_enlargement_2_march_1995-en-d68461e5-5155-4f55-bced-535d078ff5dd.html

Publication date: 11/12/2012

Statement made by Jacques Santer to the European Parliament on EU enlargement (2 March 1995)

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as you have pointed out, we shall be discussing today the prospects for future enlargement of the Union, and more particularly enlargement to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Enlargement is one of the most important and exhilarating issues the Union will have to address in the next few years — not only because the reunification of Europe, our most cherished hope for decades, is now within our grasp, but also because the prospect brings into play our vision of Europe and our ideas about the architecture required to ensure the continent's stability, security and prosperity.

The founding fathers of the Community, who did not live in easier times, were guided by a very ambitious vision: to bring together states and peoples in an ongoing process of integration, to build up concrete forms of solidarity between them and to establish solid institutions linked together through continuous dialogue. In this they were largely successful.

The other Europe, the Europe that used to dwell behind the iron curtain and which we have always said should join us one day, is now asking to be a part of this heritage. This is one of the major events, if not the major event, of the second half of this century. The history of the next century will in a sense depend on our response. In this respect enlargement is fundamentally a political rather than an economic and technical problem. And if we are not careful in this matter, we may upset once and for all the fine balances we have taken great pains to achieve among us; if on the contrary we act with the generosity and attention to detail needed, our efforts will open up for this greater Europe a vast field of action much to the advantage of all.

The decision has already been taken in principle: we shall be opening our arms to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It is not possible to conceive of Europe without them. Our separation was artificial, and we are looking forward with joy to the prospect of soon being reunited. This involves the six countries with whom we have already signed Europe Agreements; and then there are also the Baltic States. In the more distant future Slovenia will also be seeking rapprochement. These are clearly all European countries who already have a place in our family and will one day be involved in all our common actions. I am of course not forgetting the other countries who also wish to join our Union. But those I have just mentioned have a special status because they were brutally severed from a Europe of which they were once part on account of their culture and history; and because in their case we have to heal what I would call the wounds of history.

Here I feel obliged to dispel a misunderstanding from the very outset. It has been said by some that all this business is but a blind charge forward and that at the end of these successive enlargements, our Union, devoid of meaning and overtaken by events, will be diluted into an area of uniformity. At the other extreme, a number of analysts of considerable reputation have criticized the European Union for its faint-heartedness and its inability to integrate without delay peoples who are obviously our brothers. The latter has clearly been an attack on the approach adopted at Maastricht, as if success in facilitating the emergence of this greater Europe might be achieved simply by weakening our structures and abandoning all progress towards integration.

I want to make this quite plain: nobody — neither ourselves, nor the applicant countries, nor our principal partners — has anything to gain from the Union metamorphosing into a sort of ectoplasm where pious sentiments are a substitute for policies and where our institutions are undermined and our common policies diluted into some sort of informal cooperation. We have not made all these efforts to establish ourselves as a world power in order now to have an impotent and as it were invertebrate area to propose to our closest neighbours.

That is why we have always maintained that we cannot embark on a further round of enlargement without having first carried out a number of institutional reforms.

It is not my intention here to anticipate what the Commission's report will have to say, nor the one you

yourselves are going to draw up, in preparation for this Conference. I would only wish you to know what my views on the matter are so far. It is my belief that we have to aim at two types of improvements: constitutional and institutional.

By constitutional improvements I mean everything that comes under the heading of a more effective distribution of the respective tasks of the Union, the Member States and the regions, in other words the subsidiarity principle, but also everything that could contribute to a more satisfactory involvement of European citizens in the Union's activities, whether through this Parliament or through closer association with national parliaments or through the more active participation of local authorities and the two sides of industry in decision making.

Institutional reforms concern the composition and operation of the bodies of an enlarged Union. The questions to be asked are: How are we to ensure the effectiveness of our actions? How are we to facilitate decision making in the Commission and Council? How are we to ensure that these decisions are transparent, equitable and responsible? And how are we to improve the functioning of the second and third pillars? We need to answer all these questions if we are to continue to be able to take decisions and act in a Union which in a few years' time may consist of 25 or 30 members.

Alongside these fundamental problems, which are pertinent to any enlargement, there are a number of specific questions relevant to Central and Eastern European countries and their ability to adopt the *acquis communautaire*.

As you are aware, we have embarked on the task of working out a number of scenarios concerning their situation vis-à-vis our principal common policies. This is primarily the case with our agricultural policy. There are voices raised here and there calling for radical changes in its operation, even for the loosening of its structures so as to permit enlargement to Eastern Europe. I personally feel that we need to address matters in a more serious fashion and this is what we are trying to do now. Let us not forget that it is difficult to make our agricultural policy work even amongst ourselves. The interests of our Member States are not identical and as soon as we enter into the detail of proposals, national interests rear their heads. What will happen with the Eastern European countries? What will producers of cereals, potatoes, soft fruits, beef and veal, milk products and wine think of hastily conceived enlargement? What will the grandiloquent political declarations, however generous and liberal, add up to in the face of these interests? And do not the Eastern European countries themselves also have to carry out reforms? Is it not a fact that their market organizations have to be improved and price-formation policy studied? Is there no need for an in-depth analysis of production conditions? It is necessary to go into these questions deeply and look at things as closely as possible.

You are familiar with the various estimates and leading hypotheses put forward by a number of independent experts. Their conclusions vary a great deal — which is not surprising since they are merely contributions to the debate. You ought to know however that the Commission is working full out on this whole question in order to be able to provide you and the Council with as reliable an analysis as possible.

The same is true of the Union's regional policy and everything that comes under the heading of economic and social cohesion. Substantial sums are committed every year in the drive to ensure greater cohesion between the Member States. We need to think about the method which will enable us, when the time comes, to extend the scope of this policy without allowing the Community budget and Member States' contributions to go through the roof. In the meantime, as you well know, we have concluded Europe agreements with all these countries and these go as far as possible to ensure the closest cooperation between us, particularly in the fields of trade, investment and political cooperation.

I would like to make one further point on this whole matter. Whatever conclusions we might reach on the relative cost of enlargement for Community and Member State budgets, we should never lose sight of the benefits we shall derive from the development of these countries and their integration into the European Union. We have already been through this type of debate, particularly in the course of the accession of Spain and Portugal. We are now able to see what mutual advantages have been gained from such enlargement. We

must do our utmost to ensure that the same experience is repeated again in terms of trade, industrial cooperation, agricultural development, mutual investment and of course political cooperation. We must in fact make sure that the latest round of enlargement becomes as profitable an investment for us as it will be for the applicant countries.

I would now like to stress another aspect of the problem. This concerns the interest of the Central and Eastern European countries themselves. Some of these countries sometimes tend to show signs of impatience when we get on to this aspect of the matter and they may be under the impression that our approach is yet a further pretext for postponing their accession until later.

I personally think that it is the Commission's duty in this field to be as objective as possible and to present Parliament and the Council, but also the countries concerned, with indisputable facts and analyses. We have to play the role of the friend who tells the truth. And the truth is that the applicant countries still have a number of difficulties to overcome before they can join the EU.

By way of example, the Commission is currently preparing a White Paper on the approximation of our respective sets of legislation on the internal market. Obviously, initial studies highlight a number of divergencies. We are dealing here with states in transition, in the throes of moving away from central planning to an open market economy. The existence of an open economy is a *sine qua non* for their integration in the European Union. Not surprisingly, the countries in question are experiencing some difficulties in meeting this requirement.

What are we supposed to do? Should we wait passively for the reforms to be carried through? Or, on the contrary, should we brutally impose our own free trade rules on them? Either way I believe is doomed to failure. It is for this reason that the Commission has proposed that the previous approach be replaced by a pre-accession strategy. The White Paper which the Commission is currently preparing will lay down a list of measures for the associated countries to adopt as a matter of urgency so that they can be ready for the single market. But, and this is very important, we shall also be offering them help at the same time. We shall be making use of some of the funds available under the PHARE programme. We shall be advising them on the reforms. Since this is what they want, we shall see to it that their legislative activities and economic policies converge with ours. So it will no longer be a case of laying down preconditions but of setting in motion a dynamic process in which we shall all be acting together for the sake of rapprochement.

The same applies to the issue of political stability. We know that as a result of their complex and sometimes turbulent history, these states have to face up to a host of problems relating to minorities and occasionally even frontiers. The Stability Pact proposed by France and adopted by the European Union as one of the common actions of its foreign policy, will contribute significantly to reducing these persistent tensions. Several countries have already signed, or will soon be negotiating with each other, good neighbourliness and cooperation agreements. As far as the Commission is concerned, it will support this exercise through a whole series of flanking measures aimed at promoting new regional cooperation, which is at present non-existent in these areas. This even includes shared infrastructures among several of these countries. Here again we are not content to state that regional stability is a precondition of accession whilst waiting for their problems to be sorted out. We shall be helping them as best we can and with their full consent.

There remains the problem of security. Without any doubt this is the most difficult chapter of the dossier. Countries in Central and Eastern Europe have not yet managed to join a collective security structure even though they are now involved in NATO's 'Partnership for Peace'. The debate now getting under way on the inclusion of the Eastern European countries in NATO in a sense prefigures another debate which we must prepare ourselves for, namely the security dimension of an enlarged Union. How are we going to oversee the accession of the Central and Eastern European countries to the Union and hence their potential membership of the WEU? What adjustments will have to be made to our common foreign and security policy as a result of this accession? Time will be needed to come up with solutions to these problems. Now allow me to make just two points on this subject.

First of all, we must guard against any confusion or conflict between the debates concurrently under way on

the enlargement of NATO and the enlargement of the Union. They are two separate issues even though they are interdependent and touch on the highly sensitive issue of our relations with NATO and, beyond that, with the United States.

Secondly, we must continue to ensure that a properly balanced attitude is maintained in this area with our principal partners. I am convinced that an in-depth dialogue with the Americans can help us to manage this process in the correct manner so as to best ensure the security and stability of our continent. It is in their interest and ours. At the same time we must make sure that our attitude does not have any adverse effects on our relations with Russia.

It is crucially important that Europe, the Central and Eastern European countries, the United States and Russia reach an agreement on the new architecture of European security. It is in everyone's interest. Without this equilibrium we have not got a chance to succeed. Work currently being carried out within the framework of the Western European Union might well be of great help to us in this respect.

Mr President, I have confined my speech to the European Union's relations with the Central and Eastern European countries. This does not imply however that we are going to cut ourselves off from the rest of the world and focus solely on the construction of a greater Europe. Our Union is confident and outward looking — whether towards the Mediterranean, Asia, Latin America, the developing countries or other countries such as Russia, the Ukraine or the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. We shall also be working on the transatlantic dialogue.

But, as I said at the beginning of my speech, there is a special urgency, an historic urgency about the development of our relations with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The European Parliament will have a decisive role to play here since, under the terms of the Treaty on European Union, its assent is required for all enlargement. I therefore believe that Parliament must make its contribution to this great project by being involved in, and informed of, every stage of the process.

The Central and Eastern European countries are turning towards us for guarantees of stability, peace and prosperity. The consolidation of their new-found freedoms and the stabilization of their development serve our interests as well as theirs. There will be difficulties in our way but nothing will be impossible as long as we can see clearly and do not lack political will. We must sometimes combine dreams with reality. And was it not Victor Hugo who said: 'Always put some of your dreams into your actions: that is the secret of a good policy'!

(Applause)