

## Address given by Nicolas Schmit on the achievements of the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union (Brussels, 22 June 2005)

**Source:** Parlement européen, Rue Wiertz, 1047 Bruxelles - Belgique.

Conseil européen / Présidence luxembourgeoise 2005- Bruxelles: Parlement européen - Division de l'Audiovisuel [Prod.], 22.06.2005. Parlement européen, Bruxelles. - VIDEO (00:09:55, Couleur, Son original).

**Copyright:** (c) European Parliament

**URL:**

[http://www.cvce.eu/obj/address\\_given\\_by\\_nicolas\\_schmit\\_on\\_the\\_achievements\\_of\\_the\\_luxembourg\\_presidency\\_of\\_the\\_council\\_of\\_the\\_european\\_union\\_brussels\\_22\\_june\\_2005-en-db641b99-51ad-410b-b2b4-e692226a3cb9.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/address_given_by_nicolas_schmit_on_the_achievements_of_the_luxembourg_presidency_of_the_council_of_the_european_union_brussels_22_june_2005-en-db641b99-51ad-410b-b2b4-e692226a3cb9.html)

**Publication date:** 04/09/2012

[Nicolas Schmit] Mr President, first of all I would like, on behalf of the President-in-Office of the European Council, on my own behalf, on behalf of all the other Presidents of the various configurations of the Council, and also on behalf of the whole of the Luxembourg Presidency, to thank you all for your congratulations, your positive assessments and, above all, for the encouragement that you have expressed during this debate. It is true that Europe is experiencing serious difficulties, but I think that these difficulties can help us. First by making us refocus on a more in-depth reflection on the development of this Europe. To an extent, that is what has been decided: a reflection, not behind closed doors, in secret, but a reflection-debate, a reflection-dialogue with the citizens on the path of European integration that we must follow. I think that, if our current difficulties can help us to open those doors, to open that debate, then, in the end, they will have had a purpose. Some have referred to the idea that the negative votes were motivated by a number of concerns expressed by the citizens, particularly social concerns or those raised by globalisation. In short, all of that needs to be included in this debate, included in this dialogue with the citizens. We in Luxembourg are taking the risk of holding a debate-election, a debate-referendum: we are the ones who have stuck with the date of 10 July. It is a courageous decision, but it is a decision that was called for by the people of Luxembourg. Well, I have confidence in them and I think that, from that vote on 10 July, a clear message will emerge of continuity with the Constitution. I am confident and I hope that, following that vote, which I hope and pray will be positive, Parliament will take the baton so that the Constitution is not put on ice indefinitely. I myself thought that we had got rid of the ice when we reformed the common agricultural policy, once we no longer had butter mountains. Now, though, I see that we are putting the Constitution and the financial perspectives on ice. No, Europe does not need hibernation, it needs action. Europe needs a clearly marked path. So, the time has come to pass on the baton. On the financial perspectives, we could have reached an agreement, and it is extremely regrettable that we did not do so. I think that Mr Juncker gave as transparent a report as Mr Bonde has always hoped for, as transparent as possible. We have spoken a great deal about various aspects of the negotiations. We came within a hair's breadth of reaching agreement, because we know that, had there been a true current of agreement, those who were rejecting it would have agreed in the end. They did not do so because the current of agreement failed for the reasons of which you are aware. Many reasons have also been put forward not to accept this agreement. I have a bad feeling that, in the end, those reasons are more a pretext than real reasons. If reform becomes a pretext for not adopting important decisions for Europe, this does Europe a disservice. I tell you this, and Mr Juncker has already said it: we were prepared to make, in a declaration, a substantial commitment to reform. Well, that commitment did not see the light of day because, in the end, there was no final decision on the financial perspectives. Reform, yes, but reform in solidarity. We will not have reform without the people. We will not have reform without solidarity with everyone. The agricultural policy was also the target of a great deal of criticism. We forget rather too easily that there are, nevertheless, fundamental achievements in this agricultural policy. Who would wish for the desertification of acres of

European countryside? Who wishes for that? Who would wish poverty on the rural population? Who wants that? I think that, once again, we need to debate the agricultural policy and not blame it for every problem, not demonise it, so to speak. I think that, on that subject, some honesty is needed. Primarily, and on this point I think that I am echoing Mr Baringdorf, is everybody really so innocent when we discuss agricultural policy? Does everybody think only of reforming it in one way without thinking about reforming it in another? I think that you will have many more opportunities to discuss reforms, including reform of the common agricultural policy. Do not forget, however, that there is also solidarity with the countryside, which is also a component of European culture. I obviously regret that Europe has not been able to find the positive dynamic that it could have drawn from the adoption of a better Stability and Growth Pact, and particularly from a revision of the Lisbon Strategy. We have no financial perspectives. I wish the next Presidency luck in reaching an acceptable and balanced agreement indeed, someone has already mentioned balanced agreements taking into account Mr Böge's report which was adopted by a very large majority of your Parliament. Given that the agreement in the Council was an agreement that would, in any event, still have had to be negotiated with your Parliament, it is an illusion to think that the Council alone decides on the financial perspectives, since it is clear that the Council can only reach an agreement within the interinstitutional framework with the assent of your Parliament and, of course, of the Commission too. Much has been said about a fair return. I think that it is a virus gnawing away at European solidarity: we must eradicate it. Europe really must be vaccinated against this narrow idea of a fair return. I will not talk about the definition of the richest countries I do not want to get involved in that kind of discussion but what I have noticed is that there has been a great deal of fiddling with the numbers. There has been much fiddling, in order to justify positions that, if they were explained a little better, would then appear much more qualified. However, I do not want to conclude this assessment of the Luxembourg Presidency without stressing, as Mr Harbour did, that, although there has been a failure with respect to the financial perspectives, there have also been many successes. Europe is continuing to work in other fields of importance to the populations of Europe. I note, for example, that there has been an agreement, thanks in part to your Parliament, on the external borders code: this is vital if we are to increase security at our external borders, and I think that your Parliament will vote on it during this part-session. It is a success that we must not minimise and that we must not now drown in an overly negative discussion on the current state of Europe. I note, too, that there have been a dozen approvals at first reading with your Parliament on important matters, such as cross-border mergers, or concerning the internal market. I think that these are important achievements that must not be minimised. The same is true of the approvals at second reading, without recourse to conciliation, in a field such as car insurance, which has a direct effect on citizens who travel and who cross borders. Yes, Europe is experiencing major difficulties, but I think that a part of its destiny is now also in your hands. We want to open up a debate. That debate must take place here, and it must take place in the national parliaments, within public opinion. I wish you all the courage and all the cre

activity that you have shown before to feed this debate, so that we can extricate ourselves as quickly as possible from these difficulties.