

The Czech Republic's application for accession to the European Union (17 January 1996)

Caption: On 17 January 1996, Václav Klaus, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, forwards to Susanna Agnelli, Italian Foreign Minister and President-in-Office of the Council of the European Union (EU), a letter in which he officially applies for the accession of the Czech Republic to the EU.

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Dear Madam President,

The Government of the Czech Republic has the honour to present hereby, in conformity with the Article "O" of the Treaty on European Union, the application of the Czech Republic for membership of the European Union. The enclosed Memorandum specifies the application and forms its integral part. The Czech Republic also expresses her readiness at a mutually acceptable date to start the negotiations on accession to the European Union. The Government of the Czech Republic believes that its application will be met with a favourable response and that the Member States and relevant institutions of the European Union will satisfy this request.

(Complimentary close)

(s.) Vaclav Klaus

Annex

Memorandum

The Government of the Czech Republic hereby applies for accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union. This application is a result of thorough consideration by Cabinet and has met general support among Czech citizens.

This decision constitutes a step of unparalleled importance in the modern history of the country; a step of high political and economic consequences. This responsibility toward the citizens of its country and those of other European nations makes this decision imperative.

The Government of the Czech Republic is aware of the usefulness and irreversibility of the process of European integration. It is fully aware of the prospects and future potential of opportunities offered by this process, appreciates the courage and vision of the founders of the European Communities and their successors, their patience, assiduity and realism. Facing this historical challenge, it undertakes to show similar qualities.

The emergence of the European Communities has created a new political and economic situation in post-war Europe. It succeeded in providing the European nations with a political response to post-war politics and economic problems. Despite all the difficulties and shortcomings, it has guaranteed the citizens of its Member States peace, political stability, positive international relations, unparalleled freedom and economic prosperity over many decades. It has been radiating these achievements into its neighbourhood. We can imagine only with concern what modern European history would have been like without the existence of the EU and its predecessors. The Government of the Czech Republic realizes that this unique, often not very popular and in some ways still fragile creation has to be supported, strengthened and developed. At an appropriate moment the Czech Republic should assume its own adequate share of responsibility for it.

Regarding this historical challenge, the Government of the Czech Republic stresses that the Czech national identity was for most of its history part of multicultural entities. It is this positive as well as painful historical experience that enables the Czech Republic to understand fully the integration process based on solidarity among European nations.

For this and many other considerations the Czech Republic is devoted to the ideas of liberalization of economic activities and international economic relations. Therefore, it shares the conviction that the integration process, and above all the creation of a single internal market and Economic and Monetary Union, represent adequate tools for opening new space for the development of dynamic economic forces in Europe. The Czech Government at the same time accepts the broader, non-economic aspects of European

integration.

The Czech nation has only recently regained its full national sovereignty. Yet, like the Governments of present Member States have done in the past, the Government of the Czech Republic has irrevocably arrived at the conclusion that within the context of modern European developments the exchange of a part of its national sovereignty for a shared supranational sovereignty and co-responsibility is an inevitable step to be taken for the benefit of its own country and the whole of Europe.

It has not been easy to define the principles and the mechanisms of the European Union. It has not been easy to overcome the notion of mistrust in the face of such a complicated entity as the European Union.

Despite that, the Czech Republic accepts for its future membership the European Union such as it is and such as it will be shaped by the collective wisdom of its Member States in the months and years to come. The Government of the Czech Republic will be prepared to accept *acquis communautaire* and the level of cooperation among equals promised to each other by the Member States in all fields and at all levels achieved by the EU at the time of accession of the Czech Republic. At the same time, the Czech Republic will be prepared to participate fully in the continued development and strengthening of the European Union.

The Government of the Czech Republic is convinced that the right time for the Czech Republic to participate in this ongoing work is getting closer. The significant headway made by the Czech Republic in the reconstruction of a democratic society and open market economy under conditions of political and economic stability justifies such a step. Likewise, the Government is convinced that this step is legitimate in view of the results of its relations with the EU, sustained both within and beyond the framework of the Europe Agreement, including the structured activities in preparation for future full membership. The Government of the Czech Republic assumes that the European Union will shortly be ready to take positive steps in response to this decision.

The Czech Republic does not seek unilateral advantages from its future membership. Today it is difficult to forecast exactly what tangible political, economic or spiritual contribution future Czech membership will bring to the EU Member States and to Europe at large. The European Union shall certainly in the course of its own deliberations take note of the generally valued political, economic, cultural and spiritual traditions, continuously developed by the Czech people and their institutions. It shall also take note of the inspired and systematic character of the Czech political and economic transformation and of its actual results, which demonstrate the credibility of the policy of the Czech Government and of the principles and values which the Czech Government upholds and promotes in its political practice.

The construction of Europe has always been a matter of enlightened imagination, political courage, assiduous work, criticism, sober realism, solidarity and of the art of cooperation, accommodation and compromise. The Czech Republic adopts these same attitudes towards further European integration.