

Address given by Leszek Miller on the inauguration of the campaign in support of Poland's accession to the EU (Warsaw, 9 May 2002)

Caption: On 9 May 2002, in Warsaw, Leszek Miller, Polish Prime Minister, launches the national campaign in support of Poland's accession to the European Union.

Source: Address by Mr. Leszek Miller, Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, during the inauguration of the campaign promoting Poland's accession to the European Union, Warsaw, 9th May, 2002. Materials and Documents No. 5/2002 vol.11. [ON-LINE]. [Warsaw]: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, [07.06.2005]. Disponible sur <http://www.msz.gov.pl/start.php>.

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Address by Leszek Miller, Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, during the inauguration of the campaign promoting Poland's accession to the European Union — Warsaw, 9 May 2002

Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is no accident that precisely today, on Europe Day, on the 52nd anniversary of the announcement of the Schuman Plan we are launching an informational campaign about the European Union. We want to convince as many citizens of the Republic as possible that the European Union is the best thing that happened to our continent in the last several decades. We want to convince as many of them as possible that the European Union is the best thing that could happen for Poland and Poles in the near future and, which I have no doubt, will happen. Membership in the European Union is not compulsory. It is a sovereign decision of each and every one of us, and that is a comfortable situation - we can decide on our own, as in the past the citizens of the present member states of the European Union decided their fate. Time has confirmed the correctness of their choice. Now the matter concerns our fate, as individuals and as a nation. So all of us should be as well prepared as possible to make this decision. The informational campaign of the government and numerous civic initiatives serve this purpose. All of the citizens should make decisions of strategic importance for the nation in a referendum. Consequently, since Poland's entry into the structures of the European Union is such a national issue, it concerns every Pole, all citizens without exception, both those who are in favour of integration and those who are against.

The referendum on Poland's accession to the European Union will be held next year. In the constitutional referendum in 1997 we decided effectively and positively about the future of democracy in Poland by voting in favour of the new constitution. In the referendum on the Union in 2003 we are going to decide about the future development of our civilisation. I am convinced that, just as in 1997, we will also make the right choice next year. The days that separate us from the referendum will be filled with countless talks and debates. Our aim is to help Poles to discuss the issues seriously and to provide as much information as possible. The informational campaign is supposed to be a lantern lighting the way for Poles to the right choice. That is why we would like the light from this lantern to illuminate everything, both what constitutes an opportunity and what may be questionable. Next year we want the citizens of the Republic to make a well-considered decision, either for or against, but a decision based on good knowledge. I do not conceal the fact that I personally and the government that I have the privilege of representing are supporters of European integration. Moreover, I believe that there is no real alternative to this course. Either Poland will be in the structures of the European Union and benefit from a strong development impulse or we are going to wander about aimlessly on the periphery of Europe's social development and progress in civilisation and technology. We wish to conduct the informational campaign without covering up various risks and costs in order to provide the opponents of integration with knowledge that can motivate them appropriately. The decision that awaits us will settle our fate for many years to come. The government will do everything that it can to increase Poles' knowledge about integration.

However, this is not up to the government alone. We need the activity of social organisations, associations and citizens, and the government will welcome every such initiative, such as the one that the Freedom Union Party took on the referendum. We want to mobilise our efforts so that no one could get the impression that anyone wants to declare a monopoly on information about the European Union. We want to combine our forces in this great national cause with the awareness that a lot depends on the final decision.

We should ponder on what will happen if Poland does not enter the European Union. More extensive knowledge than exists now is needed in this matter. We would have to knock on the door again, but this time the decision would not depend on the present Fifteen alone but also on all those who had entered the Union in 2004. Those who with us are now conducting the difficult negotiations on accession to the European Union would decide our fate. The European Union is not prepared to wait any longer. The enlargement process has a logic of its own. The one who does not enter the first time loses at least two times.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

We treat today's inauguration as a certain symbol but also as a great obligation to embark on difficult and exhausting work. I am counting that the efforts of the government in this respect will be enriched with other social initiatives. Let us combine our efforts, our energy, our possibilities and intellectual potential in order to convince all citizens of the Republic who for various reasons entertain various doubts. We also wish to convince those who with full consciousness are doing everything they can so that Poland would not enter the European Union. As a matter of fact, they are undertaking actions to increase the fears and concerns of Poles, and nothing reduces concerns and myths like knowledge. So let us provide as much knowledge as possible. That is the obligation that we share irrespective of political views and philosophies of life. A great cause is before us. A great cause for the Republic of Poland. Let us not squander this opportunity.