

Presentation of the design for the euro banknotes (Dublin, 13 December 1996)

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We took a decision on 3 December, but we wanted first to inform the Heads of State and Government about this choice, because this choice is clearly of major symbolic significance.

Eleven months ago, our Council, the Council of the European Monetary Institute, decided to launch a design competition. Now, the design competition was given a fairly clear mandate. Before that, we had recourse to a group of advisers whom we had asked to propose to us themes for the banknotes. And then our own experts went to work: they gave all the technical specifications, and, on that basis, the design competition was launched.

The design we selected was very high on the list, both of the jury and of the public opinion survey. It was very interesting, in both cases. And what I found extremely reassuring and interesting, at the same time, is that, in the public opinion survey, we found very little, almost negligible differences between national reactions. This is one of the things which we feared. We thought, 'What on earth are we going to do, I mean, if, in one country, there is clearly an opinion in favour of one, and the other in the opposite direction. This has not happened. I mean, I find it reassuring: it seems to suggest that, after all, we do have some common roots.

May I just reveal to you the name of the winner. He is an Austrian. He is called Robert Kalina, and he has been working ... Robert Kalina: K-A-L-I-N-A — he is just learning that he is a winner now ... and he has been working for the Austrian National Central Bank as a professional banknote designer for some time.

The design emphasises three main architectural elements: windows, gateways and bridges.