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Speeding up European Reform: A Master Plan for the Lisbon Process -Dinner Speech

CESifo Forum

Provided in Cooperation with:
Ifo Institute – Leibniz Institute for Economic Research at the University of Munich

Suggested Citation: Beckstein, Günther (2005) : Speeding up European Reform: A Master Plan for the Lisbon Process -Dinner Speech, CESifo Forum, ISSN 2190-717X, ifo Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung an der Universität München, München, Vol. 06, Iss. 2, pp. 46-47

This Version is available at:
https://hdl.handle.net/10419/166225

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Mitglied der Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

GÜNTHER BECKSTEIN
Bavarian State Minister of the Interior

Ladies and gentlemen,

I should like to welcome you warmly to this reception an behalf of the Bavarian State Government. The Bavarian Minister-President has already had the opportunity to address you today in his keynote speech.

Jean Monnet, one of the founding fathers of the European Community, once said in reference to the unification process in Europe:

"We are not unifying nations, but people."

This succinct statement summarises the aim of the EU concisely: The EU is there to serve the wellbeing of its citizens. It is not some theoretical construct, but rather a vital community of citizens. That is why the EU can only be filled with life if it is supported by its citizens, if people commit themselves to the EU and identify with it.

The new constitution would certainly help the EU in this matter. Its Charter of Fundamental Rights delineates a common set of values for all citizens of the EU. With this unifying bond, the EU could continue developing its identity, could find greater internal resolve, while at the same time maintaining the sovereignty of each individual nation.

And so the results of the referenda in France and Holland should indeed give us pause for thought. The ballots cast by these citizens are a serious warning shot. It is not an accidental result. The votes show that the fundamental trust of many citizens in EU policies has been shaken. This cannot go on.

At the present time, the citizens have a conflicting rapport with the EU. We are quite willing to accept the advantages the EU offers. Surely everyone appreciates crossing EU borders without needing a passport and being subjected to complex formalities. Surely everyone appreciates the many years of peace and stability that we have in, and because of, the EU. All this seems almost natural, so we easily forget the difficult road that led to these advantages. They are the outcome of extraordinary work that went into the process of unification. Without the EU, we would probably not enjoy these benefits.

Yet the image of "Brussels" is anything but good. "Brussels" has the reputation of wastinq money and being obsessed with regulations. When it comes to the subject of "Europe", only a minimal percentage of people seem to show enthusiasm.

One of the EU's most important tasks now and in the future is to bolster the confidence of citizens in the EU.

- To do this, as many decisions as possible must be made as close to the citizens as possible. The principle of subsidiarity must be enacted consistently.
- Europe must concentrate on its core tasks. That is: common foreign, security and defense policies. We especially need closer cooperation amongst the Member States with regard to internal security.
- Europe also needs borders, and these are not in Asia or Africa. We must all realize that a great community like Europe can also break up due to excessive demands and overstretching.

An old wisdom of government states: "Non multa, sed multum" – one shouldn't do lots, but rather less, and that with great vigor and commitment.

At its Spring Summit on the Lisbon process last year, the European Council did a great deal of work in this spirit. It clearly reasserted the original core goals of the Lisbon process: sustainable growth and more employment through increased competitiveness. First and foremost, the individual countries are called to task here. They must undertake the necessary reforms.

When growth begins to increase again, when employment figures start rising, then so will the trust the citizens have in the EU. The emotional ties of each citizen to the EU will then be closer and

stronger. That is exactly what the EU needs if it intends to remain on the path of success.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The birth of the EU is a lengthy and very dynamic process. This process must be evaluated and controlled at all times. Need for change must be identified as quickly as possible. The conference today is an important forum for this.

I hope that this meeting can generate ideas for the continuing Lisbon process and I wish you inspiring exchanges of ideas.