

Challenges of Cooperation in Europe

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In my presentation, I would like to concentrate on several points: one of them the conceptual one in the context of discussion on a wider Europe, and how we in Ukraine see this discussion, what is the place we see for Ukraine in this process, what are the challenges for us, and what are the ways for coping with those challenges. Wider Europe, European Convention, new Constitution of Europe, different debates on the future of Europe, including this one, all are a manifestation of ever growing process of European Integration. We certainly can not but welcome this process and this discussion. The only problem and concern we have is that in this debate and in this concept of the Wider Europe we don't see an adequate place for Ukraine. The idea of so to say "neighbour status" is something unclear and vague, and this idea is being proposed to Ukraine, raking into account that since 1999 the European Union itself has the Ukraine as a unique and strategic partner, so taking into account that Ukraine is being mentioned in the company with outsiders of the European Integration processes, so this is not a very pleasant perspective for Ukraine. At the same time, the war devastated countries of the Balkans have been presented the perspective of association. So what are then the criteria for including some countries into the candidates and excluding the others. So in this form, the idea of neighbourhood status is not very attractive in Ukraine, provided that this idea is lacking the objective, clear objective, and provided that this idea is lacking the versification and a distinctive approach in connection with each partner. Let me remind you, the distinguished ladies and gentlemen, that Europe is not just fifteen, Europe is not even just fifteen plus ten, Europe is much bigger, and the EU is not equal to Europe. And in this regard, may I ask you a question: does this mean, all these debates about Wider Europe, excluding Ukraine, that Ukraine is being written off? Who can answer this question? And in this connection I can not agree with the conclusions where it concerns Ukraine from the report of the Munich Center for the Applied Policy Research. I would like to say that during recent times we have heard some very sharp remarks and statements made by high officials of the European Commission, including the recent statement by President of the European Commission Mr. Prodi, who seems to have forgotten about geography, and I would like to remind that Ukraine is not in the Pacific Ocean, Ukraine is not in Africa, Ukraine is in the centre of Central Europe. This statement, if it is addressed at a discredited leader, is not serving the purpose, specify whom you are addressing, and they can not but be received it in Ukraine as an insult to the people, to the society. I would rather welcome the comments made by Prime Minister Carl Bildt and Doctor Lopata that the integration is the way for the future of Europe, and the integration must continue within and between the society, and I am quoting, Prime Minister Carl Bildt, "Recently at the meeting between the Ukrainian parliamentarians and Euro-parliamentarians, we have concluded that Ukraine should have an association perspective". I think that this is the way for defining the specific place for Ukraine in the European Integration processes. So, to conclude with this issue, I would like to say that the concepts of the past that are deterrence, containment, isolation and even neighbourhood should be replaced with the involvement, partnership, integration and united Europe as the end of the process. What is Ukraine today? Ukraine is not only a discredited leader, Ukraine is not only die Chernobyl aftermath. Today Ukraine is demonstrating the economic recovery despite of the internal crisis. In the year 2000 we had six percent GDP growth, last year nine percent GDP growth and this year we expect between four and five percent. Ukraine is a European nation with European aspirations. Number one in terms of territory among the European nations and number five in population. The industrial and agricultural potential is rather big, just mentioning missiles, and outer space technologies, aircraft, ship building and agriculture. Ukraine is an ever growing market with growing purchasing capacity of the population. Ukraine was and is a contributor, not only a consumer of the European security and stability. We are the transit country of energy supply from Russia and the Caspian to the EU member states.

About the attitude of Ukrainians towards the European Union I dare say that today's parliament is one of the most pro-European and pro-euroatlantic parliaments in the history of Ukraine. Just two facts to prove this: on the 21 of November, the first day of NATO summit, the Ukrainian parliament approved a historic, I would say, resolution supporting membership of Ukraine in NATO, a week later, that is last Thursday, the Ukrainian parliament approved a comprehensive resolution on the relationship with the European Union, and believe me, this is not just about the wish of Ukraine to join

European Union, this is about a very concrete recommendation to the Parliament, to the Government and to the President, very concrete.

What I would like to ask you and urge you - look at Ukraine strategically, try to look at Ukraine not through the angle of a discredited leader, try to look at the Ukraine beyond the horizon, that is beyond the year two thousand and four, when we are going to have next presidential elections.

Remember about the scepticism over Baltic countries to join the European Union. Among the challenges we face in connection with the European Union enlargement, unlike with NATO enlargement, we do have several challenges among them — internal and external. Among the external challenges we may expect the reduction of people to people contacts between the neighbouring countries who would be members of the European Union. Few examples - Slovakia: from seven hundred and fifty thousand Ukrainians visiting this country in 1999, we have now two hundred and fifty Ukrainians visiting this country after the introduction of visa. Last year 4.8 million Ukrainians visited Poland, and we expect that as a result of the visa introduction, this number maybe twice as low. The same with Hungary, with which we also have rather extensive exchanges.

We expect the damage to our traditional bilateral economic ties with our neighbouring countries - the Baltic States, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia. And we expect the reduction in tourist use and labour force exchanges.

What could be done, or what do we have the right to expect from the European Union? First, clear concept on the objective of our cooperation, that means the perspective of association. In a neighbourhood agreement or in the European agreement - it doesn't matter. Ukraine is not just a neighbouring country but a partner country, so the differentiation approach should be applied. Emphasis should be made on encouraging close relationship between Ukraine and Poland, Slovakia and Baltic States, Hungary. And I think that the European Union and our friends in neighbouring countries may consider the possibility of establishing closer interparliamentary ties, non-governmental ties in addition to the governmental. Next, ease to a maximum extent possible the burden on ordinary people and business community in visa policy and practice. Next, we expect the conclusion of readmission agreement between Ukraine and European Union, and we expect that the European Union would help us to persuade our Russian neighbours to conclude the same agreement. We think that it would be in the interest of the European Union a participation of the Ukrainian military units in the EU rapid direction force. Against transportation concorcium - it seems to me that it would be in the interest of the European Union, some EU member states that their leading companies join this gas transportation concorcium together with Ukraine and Russia. Involve Ukrainian regions and Euro regions in local authorities into the Europe wide regional and transborder cooperation, and I can only comment the statement made by doctor Dammeyer at the conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, Ukraine must do its own homework and the EU must help in indicating the perspective. Thank you very much.