

OPENING SPEECHES - WELCOME AND KEYNOTE STATEMENTS ON EUROPE AND THE EU

Martin Heller, Intendant:

Good morning, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends!

It's a great pleasure for me on behalf of Linz 2009, cultural capital of Europe, to welcome you to the opening of the first part of our EXTRA EUROPA Project, the beginning of a symposium for the next two days on questions of European Identity, asked by three countries: Norway, Switzerland and Turkey, which we invited to participate in this project to choose a very unusual way of debating Europe. It is a pleasure to welcome explicitly Mr. Heinz Fischer, federal president of Austria, and his wife; Monsieur Pascal Couchepin, member of the Swiss federal council and head of the federal department of home affairs and culture in Switzerland; his Excellency Mr. Bengt Olav Johansen, ambassador of Norway with his wife; his Excellency Mr. Selim Yenel, ambassador of Turkey; his Excellency Mr. Oscar Knapp, ambassador of Switzerland; Mr. Josef Pühringer, governor of the province of Upper Austria; Mr. Johann Mayr, city counsellor of the city of Linz; Mr. Richard Kühnel, head of representation of the European commission in Austria; and I would also like to mention with pleasure some of the participants of the European Youth Parliament, which came together parallel to this symposium in Linz for their own event. Within the next hour we have the possibility to have these representatives to address their welcome greetings to us and first, I ask Mr. Stefan Feuchtinger, the youngest of us, to address his declaration of the European Youth Parliaments to all of us. Thank you.

Stefan Feuchtinger:

Honourable Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen!

I have the honour to present the declaration on behalf of all committees of the EYP with the aim to establish strong cooperation between future ECOCs and the EYP. The EYP is a forum for young people to discuss about the development and future of our continent. Since its foundation about twenty years ago tens of thousands of young Europeans have taken part in regional, national and international sessions. It is therefore right to say, that the EYP has made a vital contribution to the uniting of Europe and strengthening of democracy. Linz 2009 has invited the EYP to host an

International Youth Forum in the frame of EXTRA EUROPA. Students, from inside and outside the EU, have come to discuss similar topics to yours of the symposium. Linz 2009 offers a unique occasion for the exchange of culture, opinion and thought. Nowhere else is the interplay between culture and democracy better visible. With this declaration of all national committees, the EYP urges the European Commission to strongly encourage future European capitals of culture to host an EYP forum. We ask them to cover the entire costs of accommodation and travel. Please get in contact with your national EYP-committees. They will eagerly accept your offer and will be pleased to organize such an event. We are convinced that this is an important contribution toward cultural unity, indiversity and a positive future. Thank you.

Martin Heller:

Thank you very much for this address on behalf of the EYP, I may now ask Richard Kühnel for his words.

Richard Kühnel

Sehr geehrter Herr Bundespräsident, Herr Landeshauptmann, Herr Stadtrat, verehrte Herrn Botschafter, Herr Intendant, meine Damen und Herren!

I think we should speak in English if I take what you've been saying so far and thank you very much also to the representative of the EYP, well taken note of. I would like to congratulate the cultural capital Linz for this initiative EXTRA EUROPA and I am very glad that as European commission we are involved in this opening. I am here as the representative of INTRA EUROPE. I think the answer, and you will share it with me, is certainly not, Europe goes far beyond the European Union, not only in a geographical sense, but of course at the same time it is a fact that the EU has become a process of integration which has reached a continental dimension. We have today, and you know it, 27 member states, we have 500 million inhabitants in the EU. So this is quite a remarkable part of Europe which is united within the EU and this EU is not only regulating many aspects of the daily life of its citizens, it also acts as a sort of light tower for countries surrounding the EU. And not only is it a light tower, it is also a centre of gravity. You know that in the last couple of years twelve new member states have joined the EU and other states are certainly interested and have expressed a more or less explicit interest in joining us in the future. Now, because of the dimension of the EU today, other countries in Europe are defined in

their position often in the relationship vis á vis the European Union and in fact we have quite a multitude of contractual or other relations with other countries. We have custom unions with the very small states like Andorra, San Marino and Monaco. We are in the process of negotiating accession with Turkey and Croatia. Other countries in the Balkans have a European perspective but there are no negotiations yet started. We share with countries like Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein membership in the European economic area. With Switzerland we have more than hundred, Ambassador and you pointed it out yesterday, treaties and agreements, so a strong relationship. Other countries are part of the European neighbourhood policy, Ukraine, Moldova, the Caucasus countries, and Belarus might join this group once the internal development allows for this, and we have strategic partnership with Russia. So you see there is quite a broad multitude and multifaceted dimension of relation within Europe and I think today one could call Europe something like a patchwork family.

As the governor already said yesterday, I think this is why we should not understand the meaning of 'extra' in the title of EXTRA EUROPA as something exclusive. It is not excluding, the word 'extra' I think also has this notion of something special, something particular and in this sense I think we are pleased that with Switzerland, Norway and Turkey we will have the pleasure of having presentations of three particular cultures in the European context and I am also particularly pleased that the youth is participating in this debate through the EYP. The French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy has said that "Each culture is multicultural not just because of its past history, but because of its way of confronting, transforming, adding together and diverting". And in this sense I wish for the project EXTRA EUROPA a constructive confrontation, creative transformation, friendly getting-together and inspiring divertissement. Thank you very much.

Martin Heller:

Thank you very much Mr. Kühnel. I may invite Mr. Johann Mayr, Counsellor of Linz to address his word to us.

Johann Mayr:

Ladies and Gentlemen a very warm welcome on behalf of the major and the city council to all of you, it is a great honour that president Dr. Fischer and all the representatives of the foreign countries mentioned before have accepted the

invitation to come to Linz and so a special welcome to the president of Austria - Dr. Fischer and the ambassadors of Turkey, Norway and Switzerland!

EXTRA EUROPA is a very interesting project, you will discuss about the institutional design of Europe, you will discuss about identities and the democratic structure and the process of the European Union and in my view there is a lot of potential for reforming our institutions to get more involved with the people in a form of democratic culture. So enjoy your stay here in the city of Linz and in the end the best wishes of the major and the city council, a warm welcome to all of you.

Martin Heller

I ask Mr. Josef Pühringer to speak.

Josef Pühringer:

Hoch geschätzter Herr Bundespräsident, sehr geehrte gnädige Frau! Sehr geehrter Herr Bundesrat! Sehr geehrte Botschafter! Herr Stadtrat! Meine sehr geehrten Damen und Herren!

Ich freue mich, dass bei so einem großen Kulturprojekt wie der europäischen Kulturhauptstadt auch die Grundsatzfrage Europa gestellt wird – „Was ist Europa? Was kann es leisten? Was wird es leisten?“

Die Frage „Was ist Europa?“ ist relativ rasch beantwortet. Was war Europa? Europa war ein Dauer Kriegs- und Schlachtenplatz. Was ist Europa? Das größte Friedensprojekt, dass die Politik in den letzten zwei Jahrhunderten geschafft hat.

Dieser Vergleich, meine sehr verehrten Damen und Herren macht deutlich wie wichtig und wertvoll es war, dass die europäischen Staaten zur Europäischen Gemeinschaft gefunden haben. Und dass über die Gemeinschaft hinaus es weitgehend gelungen ist auf diesem Kontinent den Frieden zu sichern. Die europäische Integration hat die traurige jahrhunderte-, ja die jahrtausendelange Tradition des Dauerschlachtfeldes Europa erfolgreich beendet. Alles andere was sie gebracht hat von den offenen Grenzen bis zu den offenen Märkten, von denen wir als Exportland natürlich entsprechend profitieren, ist wichtig, begrüßenswert, aber hat sich unter dem Gedanken des Friedensmodells unterzuordnen. Natürlich gibt es auch Kritik an diesem Projekt Europa, zu recht, alles ist verbesserungsfähig und so

auch Europa und seine Institutionen und die Zusammenarbeit innerhalb der Union mit den Ländern Europas die nicht in der Gemeinschaft sind. Aber noch einmal, das Friedensprojekt Europa ist einzigartig und sollte auch bei jeder oft oberflächlichen Kritik an der EU bedacht werden. Was kann Europa leisten? Zum einen Europa hat vieles geleistet, auch das worauf Sie in Ihrer Konferenz und Tagung heute hinweisen nämlich die europäische Identität ist der Auftrag an Europa. Diese Identität brauchen wir, denn nur so kann die Idee Europa auch in den Herzen, und nicht nur in den Köpfen der Menschen weiterwachsen.

Das Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl in Europa war bisher ein Thema für die europäischen Eliten, es braucht aber um wirklich verankert zu werden die Breite. Die Voraussetzungen sind da, ein europäisches Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl gründet auf gemeinsamen wirtschaftlichen und politischen Zielen und Werten. Die haben wir. Es kann über ein gemeinsames kulturelles Erbe beschrieben werden, dessen Besonderheiten in seiner vielfältigen Ausgestaltung liegt. Auch dies haben wir. Oder über den Willen diese Vielfalt ...<Unterbrechung>

Meine Damen und Herren, natürlich könnte man einwenden, dass sich ein derartig hochgestecktes Ziel in einer gemeinsamen europäischen Identität, wenn überhaupt, nur sehr langfristig verwirklichen lässt. Das mag stimmen. Ich rufe aber dazu auf nicht einen missverstandenen Mann ohne Eigenschaften anzuhängen, der an der Wirklichkeit gefesselt nicht der Möglichkeit vertraut. Wir sollten uns diesbezüglich mit dem Gedanken des Mitteleuropäers Robert Musil befassen und neben dem Wirklichkeitssinn auch den Möglichkeitssinn in Betracht zu ziehen. Hier erinnere ich auch an die großen europäischen Visionäre in der ersten Hälfte des letzten Jahrhunderts. Wer hätte außer ihnen damals geglaubt, dass es einmal europaweit ein gemeinsames Bekenntnis zur Demokratie, ein gemeinsames Bekenntnis zum Rechtsstaat und zur Achtung der Menschenrechte, ein gemeinsames Parlament, einen gemeinsamen Gerichtshof, eine gemeinsame Währung, eine Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft, gemeinsame Außengrenzen und gemeinsamen Frieden im Inneren geben wird. Damals ein Traum weniger, heute Realität für viele Menschen. Als überzeugter Europäer soll aus meiner Vorstellung Europa sein, der Weg aus der Einfalt zentralistischer Nationalismen, in die Vielfalt föderalistischer Regionen. Kein Europa des Einen gegen den Anderen, kein Europa des Westens gegen den Osten, kein Europa des Nordens gegen den Süden. Unser Europa das wir im dritten

Jahrtausend zu vollenden hoffen muss ein Europa vieler schöpferischer Gehirne und europäisch gestimmter Herzen sein. Vielleicht kann uns auch dieses Symposium dazu einen Schritt weiterbringen. Ich glaube die Geschichte der letzten zwei Jahrzehnte, der letzten fünf Jahrzehnte, in Europa hat uns gelehrt, dass Europa zu vielem fähig ist.

Martin Heller:

Thank you Mr. Governor, I may ask now Mr. Selim Yenel, Ambassador of Turkey to address.

Selim Yenel:

Mr President, Mr. Governor, Mr. City counsellor, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

2009 is a year of anniversaries in our relationship between Turkey and the EU. Fifty years ago we approached the then European economic community for membership. Twenty years ago the commission gave its opinion whether Turkey could be a candidate or not. It said then that Turkey was not ready, but neither the European Community was ready for enlargement at that time. Ten years later in 1999, Turkey finally became a candidate and five years later Turkey started accession negotiations, or the decision was taken to do so. So in short, you can see that this association has been long, it has had its ups and downs, but we have persevered. We don't give up easily.

Our march, or Turkey's march, towards the west has not been easy. Whether as an adversary, an enemy, a competitor, we have always marched toward the west. Now of course it is a very peaceful march. Our efforts in the 19th century were always toward modernisation and westernization, but it was constricted to basically military and administrative affairs. But after Atatürk our whole minds had changed, the whole country has changed in every field. It was a revolutionary time and you can see the modern Turkey today and I think the most important part of this dramatic change was that this was done despite the fact that the Empire was fighting a war of survival against the west for the ten years before its demise. The reaction of the west toward Turkey and its modernization has been varied. It depended on the interest of course. We have been able to participate in all European institutions, the western

institutions, after the First World War, the Second World War and especially during the Cold War. But this all depended on the interests – they met each other.

Now, why do I say all this, it is because the future in our relationship with the EU is rather ambiguous. The negotiations are still going on and we believe that they will go on for some time, but there are many hurdles in front of us. The difference of Turkey with other candidates is that Turkey has to prove that it will have an added value toward the Union. This was not the case with the other candidates, the other candidates were going to be welcomed back to the family. Now, we felt, that we were already part of the family, especially after WWI during WWII and during the Cold War we felt that we were part of the family. Since the end of the Cold War the perceptions have changed and we have woken up that actually we have changed our mind set, but many in Europe have not and this has woken us up in Turkey. It took us a long time to realize that our minds did not really meet. Our effort is not to portray and show that Turkey is now indeed a western country, a modern country and then we can show maybe that we can have an added value. The obstacles in front of us are quite a lot. They range from religious, cultural, social and economic, depending on who you ask they can always come up with an answer that they don't want Turkey in the Union. And of course we can meet them, our task, of course my task, is to show that there is no reason to fear or be apprehensive with regard to Turkey. We do not want to weaken the Union, we want to strengthen it, but of course we have to address the concerns and these concerns are understandable. Because nobody has time to really understand the other. We are living in a very fast period, with the internet, with computers, we are living in sound bites. So it is very difficult to have people, who have enough time to think about the situation. Turkey is a big country and we understand that there are a lot of concerns with regard to this membership. Nevertheless we do believe that the future is bright despite all the difficulties and that we can have a benefit, a provided benefit, to the Union. We don't want to weaken it, we don't want to make it any more problematic, we want to solve problems, we want to be a problem solver. So thank you very much for providing this opportunity for us. We Extra-Europeans, I think that when the time comes can make Europe and the EU extra-ordinary. Thank you.

Martin Heller:

Thank you Mr. Ambassador for these open words and at this occasion I would like to thank all the here present ambassadors of Turkey, Switzerland and Norway for the great great help that they gave to this project from the beginning on. Without them and without their support we couldn't have managed to realize neither this symposium nor the cultural program within the following weeks.

The next words belong to the ambassador of Norway, his Excellency Mr. Bengt Olav Johansen. May I invite you.

Bengt Olav Johansen:

Good morning. Your Excellency President Fischer! Your Excellency Minister Couchepin! Landeshauptmann Pühringer! Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman!

It gives me a great pleasure to take part in this opening of EXTRA EUROPA. And this symposium really allows us to discuss all the very important questions that Europe is all about. Now the first time when we heard the title of this symposium EXTRA EUROPA I didn't know if the three countries should be provoked or not, because EXTRA EUROPA what does it mean? Is it eluded to that we are not a member of Europe that we are not within Europe as such? Or is it a more luxurious way of stating that the goodies are actually outside Europe or the European cooperation as such? I think that the three countries that are now going to share with you this symposium we have different acts actually, because we have Turkey still negotiating for the membership and I wish Turkey all the best and good luck and we have Switzerland and Norway that do not really want to be a member of the European Union, so what is that actually?

On the part of Norway we have had two referenda in 1972 and 1994 and a very narrow majority actually rejected a membership in the EU. So why is that? My personal view is that we have been in a Union before, with Denmark and Sweden, and many people in Norway wouldn't like to enter in a new Union and have the bureaucracy, as they said, in Brussels to decide what to do. And also the question of managing of resources like fishery resources, oil and gas resources, and mineral resources and also concerns of farmers that I think we share with Switzerland. They were very * in joining the European Union, whereas people in the major cities they would like to join the Union. I think that would be a very short historic review on what happened in 1972 and 1994 and today it is not on the political agenda. We have a

correlation government and they have promised each other that they will not seek membership within the electorate. So we will see in the near future, but I know that there is, in my view, a positive trend towards Europe, so probably, eventually in ten to twenty years it will be ripe to have a referendum and then we will see.

Now, Norway really is a part of Europe. We have close ties to Europe, historically, geographically and economically, in every way and also with regard to tourism we belong to the European continent as such. And we have entered into a lot of agreements with the EU and the major one, the most important one, is of course which was mentioned by Kühnel is the membership in the EEA, the European economic area. That allows us to take part in the internal market of the European Union and is very important with regards to finance and trade and to people as such to move freely within this area. To give you some figures what it is all about, 70 percent of all our exports end up in European countries and 73 percent of our import stems from European countries. 73 percent of all the foreign investments being taken place within the Norwegian economy come from EU members. More than 35 percent invested by Norway is being invested in EU member countries. So, it means a lot to Norway and on the other hand we have also contributed to cause a lot to the EU, most of our resources of oil and gas end up in Europe. We supply about 15 to 20 percent for the European market of oil and gas on average and for some countries we supply even more than that, 23 percent. We are also contributing to the social economic fund of the EU member states since 1994 we contribute somewhat in the range of 1.3 billion Euros for the new membership countries. Our ties to Europe as you may understand are very very close. We also participate in the Schengen agreement as well as in the legal part of the EU and in very many other areas as well.

So, as mentioned, I am very happy to be here to take part in this symposium and we are very much looking forward to the discussions that we are going to have to pose all the relevant questions as to what constitutes Europe, what might threaten Europe and what would Europe look like in the future and what kind of possible forms do we have in the European identity as such. As mentioned by my wife there is a lot of different languages, we have a common, within the EU for many members, a currency that probably has shown its strength in this financial crisis, it is probably

more for the EU how to decide what to do under these circumstances, but anyhow there is a lot of issues that one could address in this symposium.

Thank you very much for listening to me and we are looking forward to these discussions and let us hope that there will be something as 'extra' in it as such. Thank you very much.

Martin Heller:

Thank you very much Mr. Johansen. <French greeting for the Swiss ambassador (It is my big pleasure to invite Mr. Couchepin, member of the Swiss federal council and head of the federal department of home affairs and culture in Switzerland, to address us with his speech.)

Pascal Couchepin:

Mr. President Fischer, Excellencies, Governor, Ladies and Gentlemen!

I should also like to join the other speakers to address my thanks to the city of Linz and to the Austrian authorities for organizing this symposium. It is naturally a great pleasure for us to be part of it. EXTRA EUROPA – I have to admit that when I read this title I was a little surprised. What does it mean? Does it mean that if you are not in the European Union than you are not on a continent which is called Europe? Naturally not. I prefer to define the European culture to think of one of the definitions which is the following “Europe is a tradition which is not satisfied with tradition.” What does it mean? This continent that shares a common history of at least three millenniums nevertheless is it difficult to graph its defining characteristics and moments of the hardcore of the European spirits. To illustrate this one may want to recall the preamble of the European constitution which tries to pin down the common cultural heritage of Europeans. There was a long discussion whether you have to mention God or the Christian tradition, if you have to mention the enlightenment, if you have to mention also the agnostic sciences and secularity. In the end the authors decided just to mention the cultural, religious and human inheritance of Europe, which of course is a way to avoid the essence of the issue, which is good, because of course Europe is also Muslim, thanks to the long presence of the empire in the

European politics and of Muslims in a great part of Europe and naturally it is also necessary to make reference of the Jewish inheritance.

I would like to remember that Europe is perhaps best characterized by the famous sentence of the Roman poet Horace and as I know that Mr. Fischer is a good specialist of Latin I shall quote it in Latin ...<“Captive captures her fear, kept her and brought the arts into uncultured medium.”> But Europeans are also able to integrate newcomers, to integrate novel ideals and methods and to recognize the importance of other cultures. In short, they highly appreciated the value of innovation. But to be practical I also like to make reference to another author, I think it was Claudio who said Europe, the continent, is characterized by three things. The first thing, it is a continent where people meet in cafés to read the newspaper and discuss politics. It is a place where you make democracy. Somebody told me this morning the famous story of Trotzki in a Café in Vienna and the secret agent told the minister that the revolution was prepared in Russia and the minister said well, how can it happen that the revolution was prepared in a café. And it is that cafés are very important in our culture as you meet, you discuss and you open your mind to other ideas. The second feature of the European civilisation is that Europe is a continent where you walk. You walk to meet other peoples, you walk to discover landscapes, you walk to protest, you walk to make pilgrimage, you walk like the humanist from one university to the other to learn or to teach. And the third feature is that in Europe you have to learn to think in terms of more than one community or nation. In Austria, naturally you are familiar with the idea. Since Austria was the very heart of the middle of Europe in the nineteenth century. But it is true, that nowadays when people speak of Europe many have in mind only the European Union. The Union of course has been an extraordinary economical and political success, over fifty years peace and freedom and capacity of integrating new members, capacity of integrating the countries which were before under dictatorship and to give them a sense of community in this great EU. But the countries that are outside of the European Union actually are not outside of Europe and as the ambassador of Norway mentioned the numerous links of his country with the EU, I should also mention something of numerous links with Switzerland.

First of all, about the geography of Switzerland, Switzerland is the source of at least two famous rivers, the Rhein and the Rohn going north, going south and the source

of the Danube is so near Switzerland that probably a part of the source is also in Switzerland and we go through the Danube to the East of the European country. But we are not only in the middle of Europe, we are also part of the European tradition, because many sciences were developed in Switzerland, many humanists lived in Switzerland and also many ideas came from this country. I shall refer to Basel or Geneva or to the reformation and to the humanist movement. Today Switzerland has also hundred links, somebody said today and I think it was the representative of the parliament; Switzerland has a hundred agreements with the EU. 400 000 Swiss live and work in the EU and almost 100 million EU citizens work in Switzerland. But it is also true that in a period of economic difficulties our country's strategists ask themselves what it would mean for us to join the unions. They are very diplomatic and make step for step to approach the EU. I should like to remember that probably Switzerland is a country where the greatest number of votations were done which confirmed the EU and all were in, except one, which was twenty years ago, but since then every agreement that we put to public votation were won by supporters of the EU. The last time it was in February when the majority chose the bilateral pass.

Ladies and gentlemen, today the EU as well as the rest of Europe and the world is confronted with a deep economic crisis. But Europe, all Europe, in the past has been able to address crisis which were even worse than the current one. In order to do so it is important to remember and to keep alive our common cultural roots of diversity, dialog and innovation. The EXTRA EUROPE festival is one way of pursuing this common objective on an intellectual and on an artistic level. I hope that it will generate all the enthusiasm that it deserves. Thank you very much for your attention, I wish everything good for this symposium and for the construction of free and prosperous EU and largely a European continent. Thank you.

Martin Heller:

Thank you very much Monsieur Couchevin. I may ask now the federal president to speak to us and to open officially this symposium. Mr. Fischer.

President Dr. Fischer:

Honourable member of the Swiss government! Mr. Couchevin! Dear Excellencies! Mr. Governor from Upper Austria! Ladies and Gentlemen!

First of all, a very warm welcome to all of you who have accepted this kind invitation to participate in this symposium, in this meeting. My most recent visit to Linz took place during the very last hours of the year 2008 and the very first hours of 2009. Thus, I was able to experience the first seconds and minutes and hours when Linz together with Vilnius could introduce itself as the European capital of culture, by presenting a very interesting, outstanding program that will run through the entire year 2009. We know that today's meeting and symposium is also part of this program. This symposium is dedicated to a remarkable subject, namely the fact that the majority of European countries today are members of the European Union, but there remains a fairly significant part of European countries that are either not or not yet members of the EU. Therefore, I fully agree with Mr. Couchepin when he says the EU is a significant and important institution in Europe with almost half of its 500 million inhabitants, but Europe is more than the European Union. Let us recall, exactly twenty years ago in March 1989 Europe was still clearly divided into two parts. At that point the EU comprised twelve so called western countries, meaning about one third of the then European countries. Today the EU comprises twenty-seven countries, but still, as I have said, a significant part remains outside. The symposium before us focuses especially on three of those outside countries, namely Norway, Switzerland and Turkey. Three countries that for entirely different reasons, and something was said already about those reasons, are not or not yet members of the EU. Norway, because a small majority, but a majority, of the population rejected EU accession in the referendum despite the successful conclusion of membership negotiations together, or parallel to, Austria, Sweden and Finland. Switzerland, as far as I understand it, because opinions on membership are rather divided there and due to the fact that the country so far has chosen as a common denominator the path of a closed network or contractual relationship between Switzerland and the EU.

And Turkey due to the fact that the process of negotiating Turkey's EU membership is highly complex as we also have heard already and still is at a stage where it is not really possible to predict final outcome with a high degree of certainty. Ladies and gentlemen, the vibrant and historically rich city of Istanbul was named European capital of culture for 2010, which means a particular distinction of the city that is partly European and partly located on the Asian continent. This is a good example of the extraordinary role Istanbul and Turkey are playing today and, according to many, will continue to play in the future. The city's territory in Asia is a treasure house, a real

treasure house of antique civilisations. From its centre Christianity began to spread to other parts of the world, leaving an important heritage of art and science.

The second country we are especially focusing on is Switzerland, our neighbour country to the west and very very close to Austria. Switzerland's contribution to European history is an entirely different one. For Austria in particular, Switzerland was not only a model in terms of neutrality, but also an essential partner in the pursuit of shared interest based on close neighbourly relations and friendship. Switzerland and Austria share historical and cultural ties that go back many many hundreds of years. Great similarities on the one hand, but also some differences on the other are closely woven together and many interesting books and articles and texts have been written about the historical and current relationship between Austria and Switzerland. Although Switzerland is not a member of the EU, it is connected to the EU through a tight contractual network and Austria considers a close and trusting relationship with Switzerland as an important corner stone of our foreign policy. Mr. Couchepin has just spoken about the crisis and the problems which are also common, not only between Switzerland and Austria, but also in all the countries represented here and I think our cooperation, even if we know how deep the crisis is, gives also hope. What gives me additional hope is that it seems to be a fact that there are also new ideas in foreign policy as such. If I read how some dogmas of the US foreign policy of the last eight years are going to be changed and that instead of speaking of the axis of evil a dialogue and readiness for speaking to each other and stretching out hands for negotiations. I think this cannot be underestimated in its importance and it will help us to overcome problems or at least contribute to help us.

Let me now turn to Norway, a country that together with Austria, Finland and Sweden conducted successful membership negotiations with the EU during the first half of the nineties. The referendum on Norway's accession as I have said already was not successful. I remember well visiting Norway and meeting the Prime Minister at that time on the very day after the negative referendum in 1994 and sitting opposite to a depressed Prime Minister who clearly was disappointed with the result of the vote. But Norway too has found its own specific extra Europe path and is involved in many other EU activities. By the way, I remember a wonderful state to Norway in April 2007 and the program included a visit to an offshore oil platform with a helicopter and I got a first-hand impression and information of the country's abundant supplies of raw

materials. With the world's longest underwater gas pipe, Norway is an important and reliable energy supplier. Its GDP as far as I know is more than three-quarters above the average of the EU.

Ladies and gentlemen, the symposium that starts today will certainly take up the important issue of the purpose and the finality of Europe. As a whole, Europe is held together firmly by a comprehensive network of institutions. The European community of countries has grown to such an extent that almost half a billion people already benefit from a coordinated policy oriented to common interests. Sixty-five years ago our continent was more or less in ruins. Twenty years ago it was still separated by a deep ideological split or a border and barbed-wired fences. Today, in 2009, the citizens of the EU are moving closer and closer together taking shelter from the economic turmoil in a shared European house. Whatever formed the European model of living together will take in twenty years from now. If we continue to pursue the unity of our continent with foresight and energy we shall succeed in designing a sustainable model for a peaceful and successful union of the great majority of European countries. But this will not come automatically, it needs our will, our engagement, our readiness for cooperation and our understanding of each other. It requires in particular cultural cooperation and a common understanding of European values and of human rights and I am convinced that activities like the EXTRA EUROPE symposium make it step by step possible what we hope to reach and to realize. In this spirits, distinguished guests, let me wish every success for this symposium which we all together declare open. Thank you.

Martin Heller:

Thank you Mr. President. Thank you to all of you speakers, Excellencies who have given us the honour of contributing of this opening and already given us some insights into the very complex, but specific and hopefully fruitful topics, the landscape of topics, we are going to discuss within the next two days. I may tell that the first panel of the discussion we announced will start in ten minutes, we have a short break in between. I am looking forward with you to very interesting talks here and in between and I also hope that the cultural festival afterwards during the months of March and April will have the same success like this symposium. Thank you very much, I may ask the speakers to assemble here in front for a common photograph. Thank you and have a good day!