



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union

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**Debate on the occasion of Croatia's membership into the  
European Union organised by the Institute for geostrategic  
research and foreign policy at the Ministry of Foreign  
Affairs**

Speech by  
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Mr Chairman, Minister, Ambassador of Croatia, ladies and gentlemen,

We have much to celebrate this month in the EU - Croatia became the 28<sup>th</sup> member of the EU as of 1 July 2013.

This day goes to the history of Croatia, the history of the EU and the history of the South Eastern Europe.

Croatia joined the EU – this means several things:

- wrong are those who believe that the EU enlargement is best described by the words "Enlargement fatigue"- Croatia has shown that the enlargement continues;
- the EU membership is possible if there is a strong political will, genuine wish to reform the country and to follow the democratic standards.

Croatia joined the EU in times which are probably not the best ones for the Union - at least there are several voices which argue in that way.

We can hear such Eurosceptic views both inside and outside of the European Union.

**Eurosceptics** tell us that the EU's impact on the new countries of the EU is a negative one.

Let us see the most frequently used arguments against the EU: price increase, more bureaucracy, less independence, economic problems, and, on top of that, the Euro will collapse tomorrow.

**Price increase:** some price increases are unavoidable when a new country joins the Union, like excise tax to cigarettes.

But, there is nothing wrong if cigarettes are more expensive, the result is that people live longer.

Many products may become more expensive as there is no place for inefficient companies to enjoy remarkable state aid.

The reason is to put all the companies on equal footing in order to produce their goods and provide their services to serve best the citizens of the European Union. We have a good example of this in the roaming prices for the EU telecoms.

**Bureaucracy** - this has been a frequently used argument against the European Union.

The EU Member States have established their institutions where all 28 nationalities work together. It is a unique system where people of different ethnic and cultural background work together and help to keep the EU function in the best way.

French and Germans – who were enemies 70 years ago, are working together to achieve the common goals, as colleagues.

It is the best guarantee to avoid conflicts that Europe has faced before.

Actually, the running cost of the EU institutions is less than 4% of its budget. There are not many governments, if any, who can show such numbers.

**Less independence** - Eurosceptics love to tell us that there will be less independence or even no independence if a small country joins the EU.

Every country gives part of its independence to the EU institutions – in exchange of being part of the decision making process.

This is the way how the EU can act together and be a global player. Without this there would be only a few countries on the European continent which could perform that role.

Close institutional links will not let anybody move away from the road of democracy, market economy, rule of law and human rights.

**Economic problems** – Yes, there are economic problems in the EU.

But, the positive side of these problems is that the last few years have shown how well the solidarity in the EU works. Sure,

there are voices in the EU Member States saying: this is not enough for us / or this is too much for us already.

But, it was clear to all the governments of the EU Member States that all of us have benefited from that solidarity – and not only the ones who received financial assistance.

Today we are consuming too much of the world resources. But, the Europe 2020 Agenda is an effective European response to it and can be achieved only together.

**Euro** - it is quite popular to state that the Euro will see its end soon. And we hear this already 3 years, almost every day.

The Euro is a world currency and declaring the end to the Euro sounds in a similar way as if we would declare the end to the dollar or the yen.

The Eurozone is getting larger almost every year. Estonia joined the Euro on 1 January 2012 and Latvia will join it next year, to be followed by others: Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romanian and Croatia who have committed to do it. And why not Sweden, UK, Denmark?

These are the main arguments that the Eurosceptics use against the European Union.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last week I was encouraged by many people here to continue to promote the values, goals and benefits of the European Union, even if not all the countries in the region got good messages from the last European Council meeting.

I agree that this is needed, but, at the same time, I am sure that most of the benefits of the European Union are well known by the citizens of the country.

Just to mention 3 of them:

**1. Free movement of labour, goods and capital** - it is something that everybody can exercise personally.

**2. Peace** - something that we do not notice if we have it.

Living without the wars gives us predictability and security to live our lives in the best possible way.

**3. Democracy, rule of law and human rights** – these are the values for which so many people in the world are fighting for.

We have these values in the European Union. And we hope that there will be more and more countries following these values, in particular behind our own borders.

**Coming back to the EU Enlargement.**

I would like to mention that 20 years ago there was nobody in Paris, in Berlin, in Washington, in Moscow or in Vilnius who

believed that Lithuania can become a member of the European Union.

Today Lithuania holds the rotating presidency of the European Union.

And today Croatia is already in.

It means that the EU enlargement has taken place in a way that has over reached all the visions and expectations of the policy makers in the past.

It is good news for the countries which are still out, but knocking on the door of the EU.

Croatia is hopefully prepared to the maximum extent to undertake the obligations and enjoy the benefits of the European Union from the first moment of its membership.

Croatia is now part of the EU decision making.

Croatia helps to build the consensus of the European Union on the EU internal affairs as well as on the external relations.

Croatia comes from South East Europe - it means that we have much better know-how now on the region. It hopefully also means that the interests of the region will be even better covered.

Croatia has passed the difficult time of the EU negotiations, so that it has the best and the freshest knowledge about the negotiations. Other acceding countries now have an excellent opportunity to learn from Croatia's experience.

As I said at the beginning: the EU enlargement continues and it will not be complete as long as all the countries of the region are not members of the European Union.