

# **SPEECH/**

**Romano Prodi**

President of the European Commission

**A destiny henceforward shared**

Commemoration of the ECSC Treaty  
**Brussels, 23 July 2002**

Check Against Delivery  
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Ladies and gentlemen,

The aim of the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community is simple and full of hope -- as the preamble says, to "give direction to a destiny henceforward shared".

On 18 April 1951 the main aim was to end the age-old rivalry between France and Germany, to reconcile Europeans with each other and to turn the power struggle into solidarity.

The novelty of the approach lay in the action taken on what Robert Schuman called "one limited but decisive point" -- the pooling of coal and steel production that made war materially impossible.

This involved taking a slight "detour" through economic territory. When observers look back now, they sometimes mistakenly believe that the Coal and Steel Community was a technical project of limited scope.

In fact, the first European Community was a great political and institutional innovation.

For the first time ever, a number of States decided freely to exercise part of their sovereignty jointly, in a new and original way. They did this in a strategic sector. They established supranational institutions to ensure compliance with the Treaties and to pursue the general interest. The result was the High Authority, later to become the Commission.

Fifty years on, as the ECSC Treaty expires it has three lessons for us:

- the method has proved sound beyond dispute;
- we must not be afraid of raising our sights;
- the Convention must draw on this success.

\*

The method has clearly proved to be sound.

First, the chief aim has been met: war between the peoples of the European Union is now unthinkable.

Secondly, the economic results are beyond doubt. The institutional structure Jean Monnet devised has achieved the goals originally set.

I won't repeat the whole story, the great "success story" of the common market and later of the single market. Let me just emphasise the euro. This amazing achievement of the Community method has defied the sceptics. The euro went into circulation at the beginning of this year without a hitch, despite the direst warnings.

Like the pooling of coal and steel production, the euro is a practical achievement and the result of a choice with momentous political implications. It is a new realm of destiny shared.

Lastly, the countries of central and eastern Europe are gearing up to join us. Enlargement is the priority of my term of office, of the whole Commission I lead. It will bring the first genuinely peaceful unification of the continent.

\*

With these successes behind us, we must not shrink from new ambitions.

We have a duty to raise our sights, especially with our young people in mind. The original sense of urgency and need for reconciliation have faded. Today you can sense a sort of indifference, the worst feeding-ground for populism.

Europe must develop in the political area. Despite the positive record I mentioned, some citizens do not identify with the Community. They are put off by its complexity when they try to understand it. And quite rightly they want to know who is in charge.

Think what developing Europe's political dimension means today. It means looking at the type of organisation and leadership we need. It means developing European integration in areas such as foreign policy, security and defence, and economic policy.

Some feel the intergovernmental approach is the only way to organise the EU. They feel the era of the Community method is over. Personally, I believe the method followed so far, suitably reformed and adapted, is still the best way to build the Europe we want today.

The original project was intrinsically political and highly ambitious. Like the ideas of Spinelli, Schuman, Adenauer and De Gasperi. By playing safe and hedging its bets, the EU has lost some of its nerve.

We must muster our courage and get back on track in the pursuit of our original aims.

\*

The European Convention looks to the future, but it must draw on this success and it must raise its sights.

That was why, just after the Nice European Council, I proposed the Convention be set up -- at a time when the situation seemed to offer nothing new.

It is now under way, in particular thanks to firm support from the European Parliament. I am pleased to see so many high-calibre personalities and political heavyweights on it -- such as Chairman Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, those on the Praesidium and the members. Many are leaders in politics in their own countries.

Their task is tough, the challenges are daunting and expectations are high.

At Laeken we identified three major challenges: enlargement, the EU's role in a globalised world and the expectations of the citizens. The Convention must lay the foundations for a new political and institutional pact for Europe, so the EU can take up those challenges effectively and democratically.

We need to make sure the system works following the coming enlargement. And enlargement is nearly upon us. The European Union will miss its appointment with history if it fails to carry out a thorough reform of its decision-making process.

And if the EU really wants to count on the international scene and play a part in establishing a new balance in a multipolar world, it must harness all its economic potential, reform its structures and exercise its powers more effectively and more transparently. Globalisation is a challenge in terms of power, action and influence.

Lastly, we must come up to our fellow citizens' expectations. This does not just mean making our institutions more accountable. It does not just mean making them more direct and visible, or just encouraging more participation in our decision-making processes. Above all, our legitimacy will depend on delivering real results and on the way we respond to the needs of the citizens.

Which is why we must consolidate our model of economic and social development, create a broad area of freedom, security and justice, give practical content to the concept of European citizenship, and assign the EU the tasks and allocate it the resources befitting a world power.

We must also make an effort in terms of dialogue and information.

In the wake of the Second World War, the objective was clear and shared by all -- to make sure war never broke out again. The scope was limited: coal and steel, followed by the removal of trade barriers.

Things are more complicated nowadays. The scope of EU action is much broader and more detailed, so we have to make a greater effort to explain the issues. So I am glad this event has been organised in conjunction with the Economic and Social Committee, whose task it is to spread the European idea among the population.

The Convention has done well to hear the representatives of civil society. This will help it gain a clearer idea of what the general public expects from tomorrow's Europe.

One of the Convention's merits is its membership. It comprises representatives of the people, elected according to the rules of representative democracy. They will play a vital role in enhancing the EU's democratic legitimacy.

These are the people who will have to go back to their parliaments and party conventions and explain the Convention's proposals. It falls largely on them and on the members of the European Parliament to spread the ideas discussed at the Convention.

The Convention is a unique historic opportunity for moving decisively towards a new political entity. Even at this early stage it has shown great potential. It has gradually expanded the scope of the debate. It has tackled the issues more systematically and in greater depth than the intergovernmental conferences of the past.

And consensus is growing on a project -- the plan to put a draft constitutional treaty to the coming Intergovernmental Conference.

The experience of the past fifty years can be very handy here. It shows it is better to find workable solutions by focusing on the substance of the issue and putting prestige and individual interests to one side. Some steel and coal producers must have been upset at Jean Monnet's proposal. But should this have brought things to a halt?

In this area, as in economic coordination and justice and internal affairs, we must rediscover a sense of what we share, a feeling for the general interest.

\*

The second great virtue of the Schuman plan that became the European Coal and Steel Community was its simplicity. The plan was idealistic and far-reaching, but putting it into effect proved simple and it was easy to grasp.

I am convinced the Convention's success will largely depend on how simple and easy to grasp its proposals turn out to be.

A big step towards simplification was the merging of the Communities thirty-five years ago. We need to take another step like that. Besides, there is no contradiction between simplification and great ambitions. Then too there was much concern about the feasibility and consequences of the merger. And that reform seemed a hard one too.

Today we need the same determination to set about major structural changes -- such as merging the Maastricht pillars.

\*

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the key lesson we must heed on this moving and solemn occasion.

The Coal and Steel Community was a great political project. Integration is an even greater political project.

Our proposals and the democratic accountability needed to back them up must be consonant with the goals we want to achieve.

Thank you.

---