



PRIME MINISTER GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND

Joseph Bech Prize
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Mr. Prime Minister,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past 20 years I have often been asked by European colleagues:
When is Norway going to join Europe?

When asked this question I have found it useful to recall how Norway has been culturally and historically integrated with Europe for a thousand years or more. Our identity and world outlook have always been shaped in interaction with other European cultures.

Norway's trading and maritime traditions have kept us in the mainstream of European developments from medieval time. We were one of the first countries to adopt the political "acquis" of the French revolution when we drafted our constitution in 1814 which is still in force. Time and again we have been reminded that Europe's future is also Norway's future - that we are an integral part of European interdependence.

Alfred Toepfer and Joseph Bech lived most of their lives in a Europe that was marked by national rivalries and ravaged by two world wars. They never accepted the widespread belief that the European continent was doomed to be plagued by conflicts and wars. On the contrary, they both had confidence in Europe and were convinced that the countries of Europe could cooperate and prosper together.

Joseph Bech's farsighted vision of Europe's future caused his influence to be felt far beyond the borders of Luxembourg. During the Second World War, while in exile in London, he stressed that the future of Europe depends on its readiness to organize a union of nations. Bech has been proved right. Each state can gain more security and more genuine sovereignty by joining in close cooperation for the good of the community as a whole.

Next month, on 28 November, the Norwegian people will decide whether to join the European Union. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you the background for the Norwegian application as well as some reflections on the implications of the enlargement of the European Union towards the North.

Let me begin by going back in time. It was shortly after Charlemagne's era, in the 880s, that Norway first became a state. Continental Europe became acquainted with Norwegians when the Vikings made their views known in rather undiplomatic terms 1000 years ago.

Thus, Norway is an old nation, but relatively young as a fully sovereign state as it did not gain full sovereignty until 1905. We then had been under Denmark for four centuries until 1814, and then under Sweden for nine decades.

At the turn of the century Norway was among the poorest countries in Europe, but rich in identity and willpower to defend the newly won nationhood. Our national identity was interpreted by writers and composers such as Ibsen, Bjørnson and Grieg and strengthened by our polar explorers Nansen and Amundsen.

The need for our old nation and young state to be accepted by all the major European powers was one of the main reasons for Norway's policy of neutrality, which was abandoned only after the Second World War. We entered the post-war period worn, poor and tired, but more united than ever before.

Later this month, we will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Norway. Different from Central Europe, the Red Army actually withdrew completely after liberating parts of Northern Norway. But the firm Soviet grip on Eastern Europe made us break with our policy of neutrality and enter NATO as a founding member in 1949.

This decision was perhaps the most fundamental in our post-war history up till the present day.

In the founding years of European integration, Norway joined the United Kingdom - our largest trading-partner in the 1950s and 1960s, in the establishment of EFTA. When the doors were finally opened for a British application to the EC, Norway, together with Ireland and Denmark also applied for membership. But unlike the other applicant countries, Norway chose not to join. The referendum in 1972 resulted in a 53 per cent majority against membership.

The pre-referendum debate was fierce and split families and friends and bruised political parties including my own. Many were afraid that young Norway would lose its independence. There was widespread fear that we would lose control of our natural resources. In Northern Norway, which is so heavily dependent on fish, 80% voted against membership.

In the years that followed, there was little public discussion about Norway's role and place in European cooperation. But then we met new challenges from a changing Europe when the European Community agreed to complete the single market by 1992.

This challenge we had to meet. Over the years Norway has been more closely integrated into the European economy than many of the member states. During the Norwegian Presidency of EFTA in 1989, we began the process of negotiations with the EC, leading to the agreement on the European Economic Area. That was a major achievement. Together we have created common rules for trade in the world's largest single market, consisting of 18 countries and 340 million people.

Then history took another turn, illustrating that markets alone offer too a narrow political perspective. A better organized market can never be the final goal for our cooperative efforts. There is no invisible hand that will lead the peoples of Europe to stability, peace and development. No matter the political will, there is no single national road to full employment, to monetary stability or to low interest rates.

In only a few years we received a remarkable lesson in how economic, technological and political changes can challenge much of our conventional wisdom. All nation states, large and small, have experienced a gradual reduction in the powers which are formally vested in our national institutions. Let me mention just a few examples:

- No modern nation can shield itself against the world economy - well run industries can suffer severe set-backs as a result of monetary instability or dumping charges and other trade measures.
- No national economy can survive in splendid isolation - even the best intended interest rate policy can be shattered in seconds by policy decisions in other countries.
- No nation has a national protection against global threats to the environment - in the case of Norway, 90 percent of air pollution originates in other countries.
- No nation alone can deal with the broad issues affecting our security.

We Europeans base our identity on our belonging to a region inside a nation state. So do we Norwegians and so does the people of Luxembourg. In addition, we draw support from belonging to the Nordic family as you draw support from the close ties between the peoples of the Be-Ne-Lux region.

But this vital identity must not blind us to the limits of what we can achieve at home. In today's Europe, there is a danger of resurrecting old-style patterns of power politics which have a poor record as a guarantor of peace and prosperity.

This is alarming in a world of growing complexities, where goods, capital, services and information move so quickly around the globe. The nation state alone can no longer cope. Nuclear weapons, pollution, information technology and a global economy have all rendered parts of nation state autonomy redundant. As we approach a new century, only much stronger international cooperation will permit Europe to assume the role on the global scene which is inherent in its potential.

Let us face this reality: The idea of democracy that people, through their participation in democratic processes in each country, can make decisions and choices about their own future is only a half truth.

We need to bring democracy further - to regulate also the relations between nations. It is my firm conviction that membership in the

European Union give more real room for democracy and greater control of forces which cannot be regulated by national assemblies or governments alone.

This is the driving force behind our membership application. In addition;

- we wish to enhance Norwegian security by joining our European allies as Europe takes greater responsibility for its own future;
- we wish to ensure a secure economic future with equal rights and opportunities for our industry and greater prospects for growth and prosperity for our citizens;
- we wish to be present at the table where our neighbours and allies meet to take joint decisions which ultimately will affect us directly.
- we wish to take our advantage of the cooperative potential in Europe, especially in the combat against environmental threats.

During the negotiations, our aim was not to obtain exceptions from community rules, but to expand community rules to cover Norwegian conditions. Many of our European partners had a difficult time understanding that issues such as fisheries, climate and the growing season could determine larger issues such as the configuration of the European Union.

But our neighbours were willing to listen to Norwegian concerns. We have obtained a result which the Government wholeheartedly can recommend:

- Our shares of fishing quotas are listed by species - and this cannot be changed without our consent.
- The management of resources in Northern waters will be based on the current Norwegian management policy.
- The last customs barriers will fall, and Norwegian fish products can at last be sold freely to 350 million Europeans.
- Our national sovereign rights over petroleum resources are secured.
- Special solutions are agreed for northern agriculture, safeguarding the future of the agricultural sector throughout Norway.
- Our regional policy will be strengthened and large parts of Northern Norway will be eligible for support from the structural funds.

So where do we stand in our Norwegian debate - seven weeks before the referendum? As of today, there is a majority in favour of saying no. But the group of undecided is still significant. Moreover, the opinion polls show that if Finland and Sweden have accepted, we are close to a 50/50 situation.

Thus, our situation is certainly as open as situations we have seen before in other European countries. We are in the middle of a campaign which we conduct with dedication and optimism. We do have a strong case. We look

to Austria, we look to Finland and we look to Sweden. But this is above all a good deal for Norway, and I believe a majority of the Norwegian people will share this view on 28 November.

In 1949, in a situation more turbulent and uncertain than that of today, Paul Henri Spaak said that "pessimism is justified only if we do nothing to organize ourselves and save ourselves. If we organize Europe there is no reason for such pessimism to exist."

Today, Europe is organizing itself and we can get rid of the pessimism. But I believe we should draw an important lesson from the Maastricht debate. The cooperative effort will only succeed if we manage to make the political process relevant to the citizens. The Union must thrive on change and respond to people's hopes and beliefs about their own future.

The Union would become sterile and technocratic without a sensitivity towards cultural and regional characteristics. This is not a union of traders and brokers, but of people, struggling in their daily lives, paying their mortgages, providing for their children - caring about jobs, education, and pension schemes, worrying about crime, violence, environmental threats and about the shrill voices of intolerance and hatred.

We must meet these concerns in our daily work. I am pleased to note that Jacques Santer has made it his goal to further implement the principle of subsidiarity - securing that our challenges are met at the most appropriate level - closest to the citizens.

And it is close to the citizens that politicians must find their inspiration and their mandate. The challenges we face in each country are today widespread: Europe can and must eliminate unemployment and provide more security and opportunity for the future of our people, regardless of their family background or origin.

We cannot accept a situation

- where our youth are in danger of not receiving an education or not knowing why they are getting an education.
- where the elderly in many countries fear for their pensions because of the pressure on their social security systems.
- where environmental improvements are made hostage to the competitive watching-over-our-shoulders- attitude of countries guarding their competitive edge in the absence of common actions.
- where 20 million Western Europeans are out of work while we spend 800 billion ECU on unemployment benefits and while there is work crying out to be done all over Europe.

Membership of the Union is not an end in itself, but a means to make change more real for ourselves, our jobs, our environment and for coming generations.

If the three Nordic applicants join, the Union territory will increase by some 50 percent, while the population will increase by only 5 percent. This will add a new strengthening dimension to European cooperation.

European security will be incomplete if the Union remains a torso, cut off by the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. The new Russia meets the West in the North of Europe. Cooperation in the Baltic region and the Barents region in the High North will play an important role in developing Russia's policy towards the West and the West's policy towards Russia.

The opportunities for cooperation in these regions are great, but so are the challenges. Today, Russia does not pose any military threat, but the instability of the political situation represents a new kind of security threat that it would be foolish to ignore.

In the last few years we have discovered that North Russia is facing a major ecological crisis. The magnitude of these problems far exceeds Russia's own capacity to deal with them. Broad based international efforts are clearly called for.

The stability of our part of Europe would be enhanced by the accession of the remaining Nordic countries to the European Union, as this would create a new political platform to help draw Russia into Europe.

For this to happen, Europe must take responsibility. NATO and the trans-Atlantic partnership are indispensable to Norway. But the new situation requires that we act according to a wider agenda than NATO can offer - one that includes economic and environmental aspects of stability and cooperation.

In the wake of the Cold War, Europe will have to assume a greater share of the burden of its own security and its own defence. We see this happening in the European Union and in the Western European Union, the European pillar of NATO. Norwegian membership would thus be a continuation of the path we embarked upon when NATO was founded in 1949.

When advocating Norwegian membership I am often asked: But don't you see any disadvantages? This is my answer: I see many things in Europe that I would like to change. As a social democrat I have views on the course towards Europe's future which are not shared by every conservative government in Europe. As a Nordic social democrat I would favour more openness and transparency. I would favour tougher ambitions in the fields of environment and social protection.

But these are not arguments in favour of a no to membership. Quite to the contrary, they are all the more reasons for membership. Europe is far from perfect. We have vital challenges to meet in the West. And together we must open doors to the East. Norway should be part of this endeavour.

Many EU critics in Norway claim that our country is too small to carry any weight. My answer is simple; look to Luxembourg and its remarkable contributions to European peace and cooperation. Small nations count.

Influence is not measured by size alone. It is above all measured by the quality of the arguments and the dedication of the efforts.

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The choice which we are about to make is about the future. It is above all a choice for future generations. It is about the security of our children and their children. It is about jobs, environment and peace as we embark on a new century.

The development of human resources is now the key to wealth creation. A major new challenge for our democracies will be to secure access for all to knowledge, training and education.

Knowledge is an inexhaustible resource, there is plenty of it for all. If we are to avoid new, deep social divisions we need a new model of redistribution and strengthened social justice. Europe paved the way for the welfare state. It will be Europe's task to bring our welfare societies into a new age.

In this effort we need joint thinking and joint action. The idea of the "competitive advantage of nations" will not carry the day. Together the countries of Europe have the potential to explore the "cooperative advantage of nations". To me, this is what the European Union is really about. Willy Brandt's words summarize the challenge: "We are doomed to creativity together, or irrelevance apart."