

Address of the President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic

H.E. Přemysl Sobotka

Conference of the Speakers of the EU Parliaments

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Dear ladies and gentlemen!

It is not the first time we meet at this level. Lately, the European integration process both accelerated and gained in volume which causes problems that in turn require more efficient co-operation from all of us. It is therefore logical that some European integration problems have become kind of an evergreen of our meetings.

Let me take this opportunity to point out some of these problems as I believe we should not ignore or consider them marginal. On the contrary, they underline the need of feedback between the decisions taken on EU level and the citizens of EU member countries. This need has become even more obvious after the constitutional treaty was rejected in two EU countries. The solution does not really lie in strengthened authorities of the European Parliament. Here I must agree with the German Constitutional Court judge and legal philosopher Ernst Wolfgang Böckenförd who already many years ago stated that the European house foundations are not formed by the European political nation – a kind of European *demos* – that in reality does not exist, but by the individual member states nations and these are politically represented first and foremost by national parliaments.

Therefore, in my opinion, the quality of European co-operation in this respect may be improved by focusing on the following three areas:

- 1) Maintaining the role of national parliaments in the functioning of European Union and in the implementation of planned changes while maintaining the subsidiarity and proportionality principles;
- 2) Improving European Commission's approach towards the national parliaments so that the decision making process is based on broad

- communication; it is not correct to adopt top level controversial decisions and expect that the individual member countries and their parliaments will just approve them under pressure. Here we see the position of Mr. Barroso who has begun to implement this procedure as a promising one;
- 3) Supporting further enlargement of European Union naturally under the same conditions that applied to the previous candidate countries.

If I were to substantiate the aforementioned from the point of view of the Czech Senate experience, I can say that the EU Affairs Committee together with the Committee on National Economy meet more often than any other Senate body and its sessions have been even broadcasted live on public TV channel. The standard communication between senators and cabinet ministers has thus been extended to communication between the senators and general public. Besides the number of public hearings and seminars the Senate also organised nationwide discussion platform on the future development of European integration, i.e. National Forum, as a contribution to the European Convention on the future of Europe. The pragmatic Senate resolutions that focus on practical impact of European legislation prove that the Czech Senate takes the process of bringing European Union closer to the citizens really seriously.

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that besides the necessary national political discussions on European affairs the national parliaments must become more actively engaged also in the assessment of the efficiency of new European legal provisions. Only this way we can make sure the democratic participation in the European decision making process will become reality.

Thank you for your attention.