

Address given by Klaus Kinkel to the German Bundestag (5 March 1998)

Caption: On 5 March 1998, Klaus Kinkel, German Foreign Minister, outlines to the Bundestag the political and institutional implications of the Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties establishing the European Communities and related acts.

Source: Web-Archiv - Kinkel: Rede anläßlich der zweiten Beratung und Schlußabstimmung des Regierungsentwurfs eines Gesetzes zum Vertrag von Amsterdam im Deutschen Bundestag. [ONLINE]. [Berlin]: Auswärtiges Amt, [27.10.2004]. Verfügbar unter [HTTP://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/infoservice/download/pdf/reden/1998/r980305a.pdf](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/infoservice/download/pdf/reden/1998/r980305a.pdf).

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Address given to the German Bundestag by the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Klaus Kinkel, on 5 March 1998, on the occasion of the second reading and final vote on the Government bill on the Treaty of Amsterdam

These are historic times for Europe in the most positive sense. The course that we have set for Europe in recent weeks and months in Madrid, Amsterdam and Luxembourg bears comparison with the fundamental decisions taken in the 1950s on the EEC and NATO. We should not allow this fact to be obscured by day-to-day events.

The European Union has addressed the issues of uniting and modernising our continent and has done so resolutely and successfully, giving us good reason to feel optimistic and confident. The Federal Government's unequivocal pro-European policy has played a considerable part in this success, as everyone in Europe acknowledges.

We in Germany have kept our word since our reunification. We are aware that, because of the size, position and history of our country, we bear more responsibility than others with regard to Europe. We have accepted this duty and responsibility. The unification and modernisation of Europe is the best policy for our future. There is not, and there never will be, any alternative.

Ladies and gentlemen, on 1 January 1999 we assume the Presidency of the EU Council. A packed programme awaits us.

- On 1 January 1999, the euro will be launched, and the European Central Bank will start work in Frankfurt.
- The accession negotiations will be gaining momentum.
- Other milestones will include: the European Council in Cologne,
- the EU-Latin America Summit,
- the EU-Asia Conference,
- our simultaneous presidency of the G7/G8 Group,
- the World Economic Summit, also in Cologne.

So Germany will be in the EU driving seat during a critical period, and our partners expect a great deal of us. We need to have clear goals and be predictable and show awareness in our actions.

As the EU country with the biggest population, the world's third-largest industrialised nation and its second-largest exporter, we cannot afford to experiment, particularly when — as with the Federal armed forces and NATO — our own and our partners' vital security interests are at stake. Germany cannot afford to be caught napping here!

For the first time, the Presidencies of WEU and the EU will be held jointly in the first half of 1999. Politics, economic affairs and security in Europe are gradually becoming interwoven. Anyone here who still believes that Germany can afford to go its own way is damaging our country. Parochial politics — of whatever political hue — no longer have a place in any country in Europe.

In making this point, I am also thinking of the Treaty of Amsterdam, which we are debating for the last time today. The Committee for EU Affairs has, with the approval of the CDU/CSU, FDP and SPD parliamentary parties, recommended that the bill proposed by the Federal Government be adopted. This sends out an important signal of unity of purpose for a modern, dynamic Europe. This Treaty has considerably increased the European Union's ability to act and has thus created the conditions for starting enlargement negotiations, which is one of the Federal Government's main concerns.

This breakthrough was not easy, given the different interests of the 15 Member States. We fought to achieve it throughout the Intergovernmental Conference and in Amsterdam itself, and, in the end, we succeeded.

The progress we have made is clear.

The Treaty:

- gives the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy a face and a voice and strengthens the majority principle, in other words our unity of action;
- gives the European Parliament greater co-decision powers, which is an important step forward for democracy in Europe;
- the greatest progress, however, is in internal security, with the pan-European fight against organised crime, protection against criminals and traffickers, and in asylum and visa policy — all burning issues for our citizens.

Europol has been given greater powers, and Schengen is being brought under the EU umbrella. For the first time, the European Union is taking joint measures against organised crime and trafficking in human beings and is protecting itself against illegal immigration. In 1996 Germany had to deal with 52% of all asylum-seekers in the EU, and this was why we had to make sure that the principle of unanimity will continue to apply in asylum and immigration in future. This has nothing to do with 'Europe-fatigue' and everything to do with our special situation here. We have also ensured that the particular concerns of our *Länder* were taken into account. We have succeeded in establishing our federalist belief that subsidiarity, in other words citizen-based government, should take precedence over centralist solutions. Following lengthy discussions, we have managed to secure the foundations of our public-service broadcasting and our tried and tested savings bank system, and we have also strengthened the Committee of the Regions.

These were all extremely difficult negotiations. The fact that we have managed to attain the majority of our goals is a huge success for the Federal Government's policy on Europe. I would like once again to offer my warmest thanks to all those who played a part here, first and foremost to the Federal Chancellor, Mr Kohl, and to our colleagues in the Federal Government, particularly Dr Hoyer.

A lot was achieved in Amsterdam, both for Germany and for Europe. Why abstain? If our approach over the last 40 years had been a 'definite maybe', Europe would have got no further than a Coal and Steel Community. Anyone wanting to pursue and further consolidate European integration must be prepared to take responsibility and show courage and leadership.

I would say to our colleagues in the Green Party, your 'wash me, but don't get me wet' policy on Europe is not going to convince our partners in the EU. To be seen as capable politicians, you have to have credibility and be prepared to take responsibility. This is the yardstick against which you — and our country — will be measured in Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen, the economic and financial data for the Member States presented last Friday give an impressive picture of Europe's strength, discipline and convergence which no-one would have believed possible a few years ago. After all the accusations and gloomy predictions that Theo Waigel had to listen to, he was proved right in the end. The fact that the European Central Bank is coming to Frankfurt is very symbolic: Europe has adopted the culture of stability associated with the German mark, and it has done so successfully. That is something for which we can feel a great sense of satisfaction.

There is no longer any doubt about it, the euro will be arriving on 1 January 1999 as planned. The vast majority here in the House agree that this step towards a common European currency is appropriate and necessary for our country. However, many of our citizens remain sceptical, and we politicians still have work to do to convince them. In its 50 years, the German mark has become part of our German identity, German reconstruction, German creativity after so much war and destruction. But it took time for confidence to grow even in the mark, and I am sure that the same will apply to the euro. Once its advantages become apparent, people will change their minds.

Two things will become clear:

First: everything that made the mark successful in the past is being retained and simply placed on a broader European footing.

Second: we are moving from the mark to the euro precisely in order to ensure that everything that the mark has brought Germany is secure for the future in a changing world.
For both Germany and Europe the euro is a necessary adaptation to the new global economy and will secure our future. Only with the euro shall we benefit fully from the European Union's real trump card: the single market, which now numbers 370 million people and will grow to 470 million in the future.

It is now even more important that the economy and administration should prepare for the euro, which is why I would once again ask the *Länder* authorities, which are mainly responsible here, to act quickly and pragmatically. German firms must not be put at a competitive disadvantage just because our bureaucracy refuses to budge.

Ladies and gentlemen, what is true of the euro also applies to the second strategic target for our continent: enlargement. Things are on the move here.

On 12 March the first European Conference is to be held in London. Ankara is also still being invited to attend. This is a point that I want to underline again today, because it is a particular concern for Germany as Turkey's friend and partner and as the place where more than 2 million Turks have chosen to live. The door into Europe is still open for Turkey.

On 30 March, in the presence of the Foreign Ministers of all ten Central and Eastern European applicant countries and Cyprus, the actual accession process will begin. From this point on, no-one will be excluded from the process.

On 31 March negotiations will be officially opened with the first group: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Slovenia and Cyprus.

The economic advantages of enlargement to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are obvious. We shall be integrating a region which now has the highest growth rates in the world. With 41 % of the EU's total exports, Germany is the largest exporter to the CEE countries, followed by Italy and Austria. Our trade with the region is increasing in double figures and is now greater than our trade with the USA.

All reliable figures show that enlargement is feasible within the current EU financial framework. But it cannot be done for free, of course. And it goes without saying that we must be prepared for difficult and detailed negotiations that will require both sides to make concessions.

This is why, in addition to the economic opportunities offered by enlargement, we must not lose sight of the main political reason for it. EU enlargement, together with the opening up of NATO and the new ties with Russia and Ukraine, forms the focus of our efforts to achieve lasting peace and stability in Europe. We are using the greatest opportunity of the century — the fall of the Iron Curtain and the collapse of Communist dictatorships — to build a better common future for Europe.

What happened in the former Yugoslavia must never happen again. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the situation finally seems to be taking a turn for the better. Two, two weeks ago, I went to Banya Luka to show that we welcome the new desire for peace and readiness for reconciliation. We also expect that 1998 will be the year that the refugees return, however.

In Kosovo the fuse is smouldering, and we must do our utmost to prevent the entire region from going up in flames. At my initiative the EU looked into this whole issue the day before yesterday. In his capacity as Council President, the UK Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, is holding talks with President Milošević today and on Sunday I shall be consulting Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, about this in Bonn. Early next week, the International Contact Group will be attempting to find solutions at Foreign Minister level in London, and, on the 19th of this month, I shall also be going to Belgrade with my French colleague, Hubert Védrine. President Milošević has to realise that a peaceful solution to the Kosovo problem is part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's ticket back into Europe. The political objective has to be a change in the *status quo*, with greater rights for the oppressed Albanian majority in Kosovo, in other words greater

autonomy while still fully maintaining the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Treaty of Amsterdam moves Europe some way forward, but we have not yet reached our destination. Many questions remain unanswered. Under what rules can and should a Union of over 20 Member States operate? What sort of Europe do we actually want? Where do we want the European Union's geographical borders to be after the current enlargement process? Step by step, we shall have to answer these questions. The euro and enlargement will create a new situation and a new awareness and will change Europe in a way that we cannot yet fully evaluate.

What is absolutely vital is to maintain the cohesion of the Member States and the support of our citizens at every stage of the integration process. That is the most important thing, and a crucial part of this will require us to be constantly aware of the spiritual and cultural dimension of European integration and to strengthen that dimension. Our united Europe is more than just external tariffs and market regulations, and it must remain more than that if it is to endure. Our citizens must feel that their hopes and concerns are well cared for in 'their Europe'. This is why we want a Europe of citizens, not of technocrats. This requires moderation and a balance between an outward-looking, modern and efficient approach on the one hand and our citizens' need for security, identity and tradition on the other.

Building such a Europe for people — this must and will be our guiding principle, for a successful future for our country.