

Address given by Petras Auštrevičius on the outcome of the accession negotiations (20 December 2002)

Caption: On 20 December 2002, Petras Auštrevičius, Director-General of the Lithuanian European Committee and Chief Negotiator for Lithuania's accession to the European Union, gives a positive account of the negotiations for his country's accession to the European Union.

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Speech by Petras Auštrevičius, General Director of the European Committee, delivered at the Conference 'From Helsinki to Copenhagen: Overview of Three Years of Lithuania's Negotiations for the Membership of the European Union' (20 December 2002)

Mr. Prime Minister, Dear guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The success that we have undoubtedly achieved in Copenhagen is the result of persistent political will, continuous activities and sustained efforts. We may and should be satisfied with the outcome of the negotiations, which leads directly to the beginning of the membership.

Let me congratulate everybody who came today here to mark the end of Lithuania's negotiations for the EU membership. This crowns in a particular manner the work done over the past twelve years in consolidating Lithuania's independence and developing its statehood. I want to thank the people of Lithuania who supported Lithuania's striving for European integration. I am grateful to the leadership of the country for entrusting me with this task and for providing the possibility to carry it out. I am grateful to all Lithuanian institutions for their active cooperation in this work. I want to express my heart-felt gratitude to colleagues and experts who were and are going along with us.

We may say that we have completed one of the most important development stages of our State. It is obviously symbolic that Lithuania's road has started in Helsinki and ended in Copenhagen –this reflects our close cooperation ties with the neighbouring countries. This also speaks of the fact that Lithuania can, if need be, mobilize and gain objectives that may at times seem hard to achieve under the terms favourable to it.

It should be noted that our negotiations were more complicated than those of most candidate countries, which did not have to deal with such serious issues as the Ignalina NPP and Kaliningrad, however our negotiation results are no less successful. The negotiations were not just a one-way street: we did negotiate during the negotiations, sometimes exhausting the patients of our counterparts in order to achieve the desired results. Substantial financing for the closure of the Ignalina NPP or voluntary milk production cessation scheme applied only to Lithuania required tough and lengthy negotiation rounds both inside the country and with the EU counterparts. It would be fair to say, that for the most part due to Lithuania's efforts all candidate countries were allocated compensations to reduce budgetary tensions (for this over the first three years of membership Lithuania will get LTL 164 million (EUR 47 million). Today I must express my thanks to each Member State for being constructive, to other candidate countries for their solidarity, to social-economic partners for clear articulation of interests and backing of Lithuania's position.

As Romano Prodi, President of the Commission, said “for the first time in history the unification of Europe takes place at the free will of the people”. So under what conditions this unification is being carried out ?

Lithuania's share in GDP created by ten candidate countries is rather small (a mere 3,31 per cent), however its financial flows (calculated in appropriations for payments) between those countries will amount to even 9,12 per cent of the EU financial assistance. Thus within the next three years, Lithuania, according to the per capita data, will be among the new member states which will receive the biggest EU assistance (LTL 1855 or EUR 537) and which will pay the smallest contribution to the EU budget (LTL 508 or EUR 147). (The balance is LTL 1346 or EUR 390 per capita). The per capita average of the EU assistance for agriculture in Lithuania will amount to LTL 722 (EUR 209), whereas the per capita average of the new member states is only LTL 451 (EUR 130,6). The total EU financial assistance per capita (in appropriations for commitments) in Lithuania in the period between 2004 and 2006 will amount to LTL 2666, whereas the average of the ten would-be members will be LTL 1881 (EUR 544,7).

How will the negotiated money be spent? No matter how sceptical the farmers could be, one third of these funds will go to them. Let me remind you that 16 per cent of the country's labour force is employed in agriculture. I believe that the achieved results satisfy both the farmer and the ultimate consumer. To the

consumer this means a wider choice, better quality and higher food safety. To the farmer – increased income, wider possibilities for restructuring, consolidation of his farm or development of new trades.

I know that many farmers look forward to the membership of the EU, but at the same time they feel concern. However, even judging from preliminary estimates, it is obvious that farmers will benefit most from the EU membership. It is apparent, that the income of a 20-hectare farm received in the previous year would nearly double in 2004 (presuming that in addition to direct payments a topping-up of up to 40 per cent of the EU level is paid): if the income of such farm in 2001 was LTL 27,7 thousand, in the first years of membership the same activities would already bring LTL 51,2 thousand.

With regard to the negotiated quotas, it should be noted that all quotas, with the exception of sugar production quota, are higher than the present production volume and thus provide the conditions to further develop agriculture both by increasing consumption and export possibilities. Such possibility for growth is understandable and even indispensable for the successful consolidation of farm holdings in Lithuania, their competitiveness and operation under market conditions. Substantial financial support for rural development should contribute to this to a large extent. For this purpose in the first three years of membership Lithuania will get LTL 1,5 billion (nearly EUR 434 million). This will allow to diversify business activities in the countryside through the development of tourism and service sector, to strengthen commercial farms and provide possibilities for their growth.

The other major part of the EU support will come to Lithuania through Structural and Cohesion Funds.

Even though Lithuania is in great need of support for its social and economic development, the real and main advantages of the EU membership will be gained through the participation in the single market, increasing trade, investments and economic cooperation.

By its separate protocol, the EU has committed to allocate to Lithuania an additional financial assistance which amounts to nearly LTL 1 billion (EUR 285 million) in the period 2004-2006 under the special Ignalina Programme, which will continue beyond this period and will be based on Lithuania's actual payment needs. Besides, around LTL 725 million (EUR 210 million) have already been committed in the Ignalina International Decommissioning Support Fund, the disbursement of which started in the beginning of 2002. Next year the European Commission considers further PHARE allocations of up to LTL 100 million (EUR 30 million). Thus the funds allocated by the EU have approached Lithuania's needs for the decommissioning of the Ignalina NPP and now we move on to the next stage – the internal preparation both for the successful absorption of the existing assistance and effective extension of the Ignalina Programme beyond 2006.

With regard to the transit of persons between the Kaliningrad region and other parts of the Russian Federation, the EU guarantees and assures that it will bear all additional costs incurred by Lithuania.

For the first three years of membership Lithuania will get LTL 468,5 million (EUR 135,7 million) to get ready for the participation in the Schengen Agreement.

It should be noted that Lithuania accedes to the EU not as an observer or an associated member. As of 1 May 2004, Lithuania will be a full member of the EU with all its rights and obligations arising from the membership. In the areas where we realised that it would be too difficult to implement all obligations of membership at once, we negotiated transitional periods. So there are 22 transitional periods the total duration of which is 1622 months. Most of them are in negotiation Chapters on Agriculture and the Environment. Lithuania was also granted a 7-year transitional period postponing the right of the EU nationals to buy agricultural land and forests in Lithuania. This transitional period will be reviewed in the third year of its application.

In its turn, the EU also asked for transitional periods for national road haulage services in the EU member states, direct payments in the agricultural sector and free movement of persons. However, it is already obvious that at least 5 Member States of the EU (Great Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden, Ireland and

Denmark) will not apply the latter transitional period with regard to Lithuania.

What was the key to the successful end of not easy and long negotiations ? I would point to the following reasons which brought about success in Copenhagen:

1. Stable and continuous political consensus; Agreement between political powers on European integration issues sets a good example for the future;
2. Consolidation of reforms being carried out in the country and the feedback of their results with the results of the negotiations (e.g. the issue of third party liability insurance of car owners).
4. Setting of a feasible time-table of negotiations and correct identification of priorities (a proof of this is the decision adopted at the Laeken European Council on 14-15 December 2001, according to which the first wave of enlargement was to embrace 10 countries, including Lithuania).
5. Efficient coordination of the pre-accession and negotiation processes (application of the best European coordination practice).
6. Constructive relations with partners on the opposite side of the negotiating table.
7. The growing support of the people from the very outset of negotiations (consolidation of public support).
8. A major role was played by modern technologies, enabling to speed up negotiation process.

At the same time, I would like to thank our advisers and consultants who are in the audience for their priceless assistance.

The successful conclusion of negotiations cannot and should not be attributed to the negotiation tactics alone, underestimating a wider strategy. One should admit that enlargement took place according to the Big Bang scenario, embracing 10 new member states. This is the strategy which ploughed its way justifiably and eventually consolidated its position at the Laeken European Council meeting in December. I am convinced that the chosen strategy was the right road leading to the actual unification of Europe.

I would also like to point to the contribution of the countries which held the Presidency of the European Union in recent years to the common success. And all of us should, first of all, pay a due tribute to the Danish Presidency.

Without the afore-mentioned efforts this unique stage of enlargement in terms of quantity and quality would be hardly possible.

With the negotiations being over, now we are facing the most crucial stage - the membership of the EU. We will not benefit from the membership if we are just passive observers of what is going on in Brussels. We will have 7 votes in the Council and 13 seats in the European Parliament (2004-2009), but they will be worthless if we do not make use of them. We will really have the possibility to decide ourselves what Europe we want to see and what political priorities we want to chose if we take an active part in this process. I believe that necessary prerequisites are already in place – the present pre-accession system is operating quite successfully. A strong team of European integration specialists has been formed, distribution of tasks is done in a practical and rational way, but what is most important, the EU matters increasingly become part of our internal policies.

When speaking about what we can get from the EU, we must also think about what we can give in return.

Lithuania is already active in terms of business relations, investments, NGOs' relations with the so-called new neighbours of the EU- Belarus, the Ukraine and Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation. We will carry on these activities and will involve in them our Western partners. Namely in this way not only we, but also the non-member states of the EU, will benefit from the EU enlargement.

The previous week was the last one when we could still be called candidate countries. Now our main task is to consolidate what has been achieved by turning the opportunities into results. First of all we must ensure a successful ratification of the Accession Treaty – for this I hope to obtain support from all of you. At the present moment 64 per cent of the population are in favour of the membership of the EU. However we must seek that each citizen of our country understands what is the EU, what we strive to achieve by being a member of this organisation and perceive the benefits it will bring. So if each of us will tell our colleagues, neighbours or family what you heard or will hear today, it will already be a considerable contribution to a better understanding of the EU in our country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The successful conclusion of negotiations is only a prerequisite for the successful membership. But in order for the latter to be a real success the combined efforts of all of us are needed. On our road it is important not to stop and not to limit ourselves to those areas in which the EU integration has made steady progress. It is important to have one's own vision in creating the united Europe. By improving the administration of our state, we will at the same time contribute to the prosperity of the whole Continent and implementation of Lisbon objectives. Robert Schuman, one of the pioneers of the European idea, said that democratic state is a continuous creation and it knows that there is always room for perfection. Thus I would like to wish you good luck in this continuous process of the creation of Europe.

Wish you Merry Christmas and Happy New Year in the eventually united Europe!

Thank you for attention.