

Address given by Ludger Volmer to the German Bundestag on the enlargement of the European Union (8 June 1999)

Caption: On 8 June 1999, in Berlin, Ludger Volmer, German State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, delivers an address to the Bundestag in which he refers, in particular, to the financing of the enlargement of the European Union.

Source: Dr. Ludger Volmer, Staatsminister im Auswärtigen Amt, am 08.06.1999 vor dem Deutschen Bundestag zur Deutschen EU-Ratspräsidentschaft. [ONLINE]. [Berlin]: Auswärtiges Amt, [03.05.2005]. Disponible sur <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/infoservice/download/pdf/reden/1999/r990608b.pdf>.

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Address given to the German Bundestag by Dr Ludger Volmer, Minister of State at the German Foreign Office, on Germany's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 8 June 1999

Widening and deepening of the EU

Mr Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen: when Germany assumed the Presidency of the EU, it was faced with a twofold, difficult task. First, it had to move forward the process of widening and deepening the European Union's structures and, at the same time, it had to contend with the most difficult crisis that Europe had experienced since the end of the Second World War.

Shortly before the end of the Presidency, we can already report that the German Government has successfully coped with this difficult task. The EU is now ready for enlargement. Its political capacity to act has been strengthened. At the same time, over the past few months and under the most difficult conditions, Europe has demonstrated that it is capable of acting as an entity and of formulating firm policies.

[...]

The German Government is positive that European Union enlargement to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is not a duty enshrined in the Treaty. Rather, it must be very much in the interests of German politicians to guard against all the uncertainties that we could theoretically face in the large area to the east of us, which has been in a state of flux since the collapse of the Soviet Union, by exporting European structures. It would be tantamount to exporting stability.

Every European politician knows that enlargement to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe can succeed only if the structures of the present European Union are fundamentally altered. The German Government has made a very substantial contribution to this.

Agenda 2000

We have, for example, managed to make significant progress in a few major areas concerning Agenda 2000. These are areas which were previously believed to involve insurmountable problems. It was thought that the insurmountability of these problems might even cause the European enlargement process to fail. Some Bavarian Christian Socialists, in particular, were saying that, in the light of the impossible situation and the major problems involved in the Agenda process, they would prefer to forget about enlargement to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, shut themselves away in Western Europe and make life here as cosy as possible.

Financial repercussions of the reforms

Honourable Members of the Opposition, you have voiced the criticism that the financial policy is difficult to manage. One reason for this is, no doubt, the fact that we were left an extremely difficult legacy.

However, as a result of the fact that the Finance Minister in the present government has a policy of being open, it has become clear in just the past few weeks that we are having to contend with a structural deficit of DEM 30 000 million. This is not a deficit for which we ourselves are responsible, it is one that you left us. A former government that has amassed such a pile of debts is not necessarily competent to give advice on financial policy.

If there has to be criticism, the basis for that criticism must at least be clearly defined. On the one hand, your Chairman, Mr Schäuble, is saying that more money has to be invested in the European enlargement process (and I agree with that). On the other hand, the German Government is allegedly at fault for not keeping enough back for the German budget. I should like to know the basis for your criticism. Do you want more money for Europe, or do you want more money for Germany? For some Christian Socialists and Christian Democrats, the conflict has now become so intense that they are no longer voting for Europe or for Germany but for Bavaria.

Bavarian Premier Stoiber did just that yesterday ...

We have managed to ensure that, in the medium term, expenditure stability in a European setting will be maintained and that the contributions that have to be found from the German budget will be reduced. Of course, we have not done this in such a way that we could tell the German people that our European policy is to save money at the expense of other Europeans. But we have done so in such a way that Germany no longer has to fund all the reform projects. The reforms that we have implemented in a European context are essentially structural reforms which help to save money.

[...]