

Speech of Commissioner Danuta Hübner

"The EU in an era of globalization"

Policy Network seminar on

**'Globalisation, Risk and Inequality:
Towards a Dynamic Approach to Sustainable Growth'**

Brussels, 5 December 2007

Dear Ministers,

Dear Commissioner Mandelson, Dear Commissioner Almunia,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me thank you for your invitation to speak to you tonight. It is a pleasure for me to be here with you at this high-level seminar on globalisation. And let me commend the Policy Network for engaging in an open dialogue with international policy-makers and experts on this important topic.

You have a long and tough day behind you and we have now moved on to some drink and food. I nearly feel sorry that I do not let you just focus on this but at least I promise to be optimistic. This is also a good time to put our minds into a more optimistic mood.

I have this feeling that on globalisation everything has been already said and more than once. Globalisation is a fact of life. It is not a matter of right or wrong. Let me quote Pope John Paul II who said that: *'globalisation is not a priori either good or bad. It is what people make of it'*. In other words the floor is ours.

The interesting thing is that our fellow European citizens are not as big globalisation sceptics as it is commonly assumed. A recent Eurobarometer

poll reveals that 46% of the respondents perceive globalisation as a positive process. But those who perceive it as negative, 39%, remain an albeit big minority (the rest of 15% does not know what to think). But these figures hide the huge spread between the Danes and the Greeks, where 82% versus 28% believe that globalisation is positive.

At the same time, 50% of us think that the EU enables its citizens to benefit from globalisation [31% disagree, 19% don't know].

What I find encouraging in these figures is that EU citizens by and large trust the Union. What I find worrisome, however, is that globalisation is increasingly perceived as a threat, too. This is a clear call for action for us policy makers.

When we look at the map, we see how small Europe actually is in a global context, both in territorial and in population terms. And let me say that even if smallness has not already done so, then globalisation should have convinced even the euro-sceptics that Europe needs more and deeper integration. European Member States need to stand by each other. We need Europe-wide approaches to economic strategies and policies. And the European Union is the perfect platform to do so.

But integration as a defensive strategy is doomed to fail. That is why we all need an inspiring strategy for Europe, to let us live in a Europe that matters globally and benefits from globalisation. Such a Europe is

- a Europe at peace. This is a vital pre-requisite. Yet, having secured peace for more than half a century, while a humongous success, might not be enough for our younger generation as a rationale for more Europe because they do not remember wars or queuing for visa

- A Europe that matters globally and benefits from globalisation is an open Europe. This is another precondition. An inward-looking Europe will marginalise itself.

Remaining open, by definition, excludes protectionism. Historically speaking protectionism has always failed. This does not mean that we should expose our citizens to all economic gales without protection. It does not mean that we give up solidarity. It rather means that Europe needs to continuously restructure its economy and build its competitiveness to start with. It also means that European nations need to modernise their social models. Needless to say that protectionism and protection are of course two different concepts.

Not only must we remain open to the changing global world but we must also remain open to our neighbours. This latter aspect seems to be forgotten too often.

- A Europe that matters globally and benefits from globalisation is a Europe with common values. Peace, democracy and respect for human rights are some of our foundations. Such common values should help making us truly feel citizens of Europe. And the feeling of being European means the feeling of belonging, and belonging facilitates cooperation, further integration, makes us all feel stronger, more assertive and solidaristic.
- A Europe that matters globally and benefits from globalisation is a Europe tackling the big global issues such as climate change, migration, energy challenge and poverty jointly and effectively.

Globalisation challenges are common challenges across the world. For some, they are the challenges of today, for others they are the challenges

of tomorrow - this is the only difference. Our seemingly opposite interests are very common indeed - we are just in different time zones.

Globalisation is not a zero sum game but rather a win-win situation; that can be obvious but only if we develop appropriate responses. The sets of policy recommendations across the world have become today increasingly similar, no matter where you are or who you are. And that is why in a global world of today and tomorrow competitiveness and co-operation are not foes any more but friends.

Hundreds of networks of small and medium-sized competing companies emerge across the Europe because when going global they benefit from cooperation. As a result globalisation is about enlarging the cake, not about sharing it among more eaters. And this is the good news.

In such a context we need more of localised responses to globalisation. And we can learn a great deal from each other.

To conclude, let me quote the Berlin declaration, signed this year by European leaders to mark the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome: In Europe *'there are main goals which we cannot achieve on our own, but only in concert. Tasks are shared between the European Union, the Member States and their regions and local authorities'*.

I have nothing more to add, except for one more observation. In the global world, responsibilities and tasks must be also shared globally, between Europe and what we used to call the rest of the world and what today I would call our global partners.

Thank you for your attention.