

Intervention by
Mr. Calin Popescu-Tariceanu, Prime Minister of Romania,
ELDR Vice-President and President of the PNL (National Liberal Party)
at the 30th Anniversary of the ELDR, Stuttgart, 17 March 2006

Dear liberals from all across Europe,

Dear Colleagues,

I am happy to attend this anniversary in a moment of important change for my country and for Europe.

We celebrate today 30 years since nine EU liberal parties got together and, enthusiastically, decided to set up a Union-wide political movement. They put forward, via the Stuttgart Declaration, a vision and a plan of action that is still valid in our times.

It was an optimistic, visionary political document!

They say liberalism is called in times of crises or change. This is a challenge for our generation too.

We, the liberals, have been the pioneers and the most enthusiastic promoters of the united Europe. While others have expressed doubt, we believe in our dream.

When ELDR was founded, Romania and the other communist countries of Europe were sunk into the "red darkness". Communism was all the opposite to liberalism. Liberty, democracy, human rights, free market economy or private property - what we call our political creed, was precisely what communists hated most and struggled to destroy.

The accession of the ten countries in 2004 made the Union truly European. But the European Union will be fulfilled only when Bulgaria and Romania will join.

Now, we are pretty close to that. I am highly confident that the May report of the European Commission will state, unequivocally, that both our countries will join the Union next year.

I feel duty bound to thank my friends and colleagues here, on behalf of my government and my fellow citizens for all your support.

Liberals are stronger when they support each other. Our job is not easy, but we like it! We like to reform our countries and speed up their development. This is more than obvious in Central and Eastern Europe, where we had to escape from the communist prison and turn into free and democratic societies.

People in former communist countries know how undignified the life without freedom is. That's why, liberals in Central and Eastern Europe can bring much freshness and strength to the liberal movement in Europe.

We must be strong as there is much challenge in the future!

Dear Colleagues,

Liberalism remains viable and indispensable for building up a united Europe. Liberal policies are now widespread. Liberal values have taken firm root in the cultural background of the civilised world. But this doesn't mean that the mission of liberalism is over.

Our Mission is alive!

This is true for at least two reasons:

1) Liberalism is the only political movement capable of meeting the challenges of a post-modern globalized world. It encompasses solutions to overcome economic, political and social deficits.

This is only natural, since liberalism is the true foundation of the spirit of initiative and entrepreneurship, the catalyst of creative competition.

2) Liberalism is the only doctrine and political movement that can secure stability and safeguard the economic and moral bases of our world.

Our values are the ultimate defence against the attempts to restrict or block the mechanisms of a market economy and from the most insidious attacks against individual freedoms.

Liberalism has been the hope and catalyst in our transition to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. That's why its attractiveness should be enhanced for expanding the democratic family of nations.

Dear Colleagues,

We are here to celebrate, but also to think about our common future.

The emerging economies of the Union (including Bulgaria and Romania) have a long list of problems: building up an adequate infrastructure, producing and consuming energy efficiently, improving financial discipline, protecting the environment, dealing with the consequences of an intense brain drain. And not least, responding with efficacy to non-conventional threats.

The success is inconceivable in the absence of **good governance and free market economies**, in order to be able to make full use of the EU opportunities.

A United Europe needs economies which are free of the diseases of transition: corruption, black market, or illegal cross-border trafficking.

Looking globally, **Europe needs to take seriously into account the reforms that can make it more competitive and help it find its place in the global economy.**

- Lifting trade barriers and open up the world market, as it is seen in our Electoral Manifesto, will contribute to face global challenges and raise the European competitiveness.

I would like to mention in this context my Government initiative to launch negotiations for a **regional Free Trade Agreement for Eastern Balkans and Moldova**, based on the CEFTA principles.

The support we have received from the Stability Pact and the encouragements from the European Commission are important incentives for convening a high level meeting in Bucharest on April for launching this important regional process.

- At Lisbon, EU countries agreed to restructure the European economy and make it "the world's most dynamic and competitive". The results in setting **science-based economies** are not according to expectations. Unless our governments and companies adjust to trends by investing more in R&D, in education, in valorising knowledge and creativity, painful corrections would be inevitable.
- **Labour reforms** have to establish a full recognition of qualifications, best use of our education systems, guaranteeing equal opportunities for achieving the full potential of our human resources.
- **The internal market must become a genuine one.** E-commerce, public procurement, energy liberalization, are areas in which further liberalization should be introduced especially in the new emerging markets. From our experience in Central and Eastern Europe, capitals don't wait. The competition for investments in the region is many times

decided by **simplified and transparent rules in the business environment.**

- **The tax competition** encourages the mobility of business and stimulates the markets to be more dynamic. For my government, the flat tax has been a success in 2005, as the revenue to the state budget has risen by 20%, as compared to 2004, new jobs were created, direct investments in 2005 were above those reported in 2004 and enterprises have been able to better use their capitals.

Dear Colleagues,

European Liberalism is called today to give answer to a fundamental question:

What is the Europe that we want to build up? A Europe of governments? A Europe of centralizing bureaucracies? **No.**

Europe needs a construction of values and commitment to liberty. And on top of that, Europe needs that the European citizens believe and live by these values.

This is the Europe of a strong citizenry: A Europe of successful communities; A Europe free from centralising will or abuse; A Europe of huge opportunities for all.

Our liberal project points to a Europe of the individual.

The great transformation resides not in stepping up, from the national to the supranational level, but in taking the Union further, from a Europe of states to a Europe of citizens.

This is why liberalism will remain the natural source of inspiration for the new European construction.

For the future of the United Europe, it is important to keep the dream alive.

This will maintain the hope for success and trust in the merits of the liberal and democratic values, free market economy and respect for the dignity and worth of individuals.

I am confident that ELDR is able to give such a strong message to all European citizens. ELDR can re-launch the vision of unity on our continent!
