

Voice of the People

Manuscript
EU – future
BRT, Germany

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EU and the future

BRT, Germany

Presenter Katharina Altemeier:

Who, only some years ago, would have thought that the euro would be introduced that fast. It is common knowledge that a constitution for the European Union is in the making. The EU keeps developing at fast pace. Therefore, it would be interesting to see what other developments are conceivable for the future? Are there limits to the growing together of the European Union? These are questions that also occupy people in Nuremberg's pedestrian zone.

Passer-by: Well, take, for example, me – I come from Bulgaria. When will Bulgaria be able to join the EU?

Passer-by: I would like to know whether Turkey will join the European Union. That is something that really interests me.

Passer-by: How far will the EU enlargement go? And how many countries should join?

Friedrich: I have a feeling that this year's enlargement has reached the EU's limits. That is to say its integration opportunities and capacities are strained in many areas, as far as finance, organization, language and politics are concerned. To enlarge even further, by letting Turkey join for example, would indeed jeopardize the whole project. That is to say, we know have to be clever enough to say that we might talk about Bulgaria or maybe Croatia joining in the next three, four or five years. However, the European Union should get a consolidation phase of ten to twenty years before politicians even start to think about enlarging the EU even further. Those who want the European project to succeed have to plug up the courage to define its limits. And they seem to be clear to me: after this year's enlargement we should give it a rest for a longer period of time if we want it to be a successful project.

Passer-by: I would like to know more about the EU's common constitution: How does it handle interventions abroad? Will we take common measures in times of crisis? This is actually what interests me most; will we have a common basis?

Friedrich: That is what I expect in the next few years, common European operations that take many different forms. I would say that the majority of interventions today are police interventions and not military actions. Unfortunately, our world has become small, instable, and incalculable and the European Union as part of NATO and other organizations will have to undertake stabilizing police operations in many parts of the world – under the banner of the European Union.

Passer-by: I am interested in the question of traffic. I use the motorway A6 pretty frequently and always realize that there are incredibly many trucks from Poland on the route. And as I have a job in Nuremberg at the moment and thus am dependent on this route, I would simply like to know whether traffic would increase even more?

Friedrich: It goes without saying that this motorway must be improved. And we will have to expand the route, where it has two lanes, to three lanes more quickly than we have thought. And I guess we even will have to build routes with four lanes in future, as more deliveries from Germany to the east and vice-versa will entail more traffic. Of course, the air and rail transportation systems will have to be expanded as well as. I might be wrong, but I expect that some goods, due to new technologies, such as microelectronics, will become even smaller, lighter and thus less bulky to transport. However, when it comes to food... we can't make oranges and bananas smaller, they will have to be transported. And they have to be delivered as quickly as possibly for they are perishable. In a nutshell: regardless of the EU enlargement, we will have to expand our route, air and rail transportation systems any time soon, because it has become a small world after all.

Passer-by: I would like to know whether the EU want to continue living at the expense of the Third World – I think we live at their expense and should, at some point, make up for that.

Friedrich: That is a very difficult question. You refer to the fact that our farmers are kind of protected by expensive custom barriers, thus avoiding cheaper products to get in. Globalisation, however, makes it much more difficult to keep this strategy. In future, farmers will only receive subsidies for environmental reasons, like improving sustainability. I am sure that there will be heated discussions about how to guarantee our farmers' incomes and at the same time open our markets, to some extent, for products from the Third World. That is one of the most difficult questions for which politicians have to find an answer in the next decades.