

Speech of EUI President Patrick Masterson at the Academic Session of the European University Institute in Florence, November 7, 2001

By Patrick Masterson

Suggested Citation: Patrick Masterson, *Speech of EUI President Patrick Masterson at the Academic Session of the European University Institute in Florence, November 7, 2001*, 2 German Law Journal (2001), available at <http://www.germanlawjournal.com/index.php?pageID=11&artID=119>

[Editors' Note: Dr. Patrick Masterson, out-going President of the EUI, presented these remarks at the Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE in the Badia Fiesolana, Fiesole, Italy, on 7 November 2001. The Editors wish to express gratitude to President Masterson for allowing GLJ to publish his speech]

Your Excellencies, President Prodi, distinguished Commissioners, dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:

[1] It is a great pleasure to welcome you here this afternoon to our birthday celebration which we will continue to celebrate with special events during the coming year. For it is a special birthday, namely our 25th anniversary. From our modest beginnings in 1976 we have grown to be an important independent intellectual resource for Europe, the largest European doctorate programme in our disciplines of law, economics, social and political science and history and civilization and a significant postdoctoral centre for research and advanced studies in the social sciences.

[2] Funded by the Member States, the institutions of the European Union, and endowed research funds, the European University Institute is the intellectual alma mater for over 500 doctoral students, 50 professors and about 60 visiting senior researchers - this European intellectual powerhouse is splendidly sustained by a dedicated multinational support staff to all of whom I express warm appreciation and sincere thanks.

[3] We will have the pleasure of brief remarks by the President of the Commission, Professor Prodi, the second President of the Institute, Professor Maihofer, the President elect Professor Yves Mény and a young doctorate researcher, Jesse Scott, all of whom I heartily welcome.

[4] The founding President of the Institute, Dr Max Kohnstamm, had hoped to be with us today but on medical advice was unable to travel. He has asked me to convey the following greeting on this auspicious day.

[5] Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am extremely sorry not to be in your midst this afternoon but very grateful to the Institute's President for allowing me nevertheless to join you for a few moments.

[6] What strikes me most, thinking back to the solemn opening of the Institute's first academic year, is the incredible development of the Institute that since has taken place. That beginning was indeed extremely modest, some ten professors for the four departments all together, some sixty students chosen from about one hundred applicants and a small administrative staff.

[7] I intended to mention a few names from members of the then High Council, the Academic Council, the student body and the administration who made that beginning possible. But I soon realized, however, that that was impossible. I would have to name everybody or no-one because the beginning became a joint effort of all who participated in the adventure, sometimes not without having serious difficulties. and, yes, in the adventure, because an adventure it was! However, I cannot omit to mention the generosity of the Italian Government of those early days which allowed the Institute to settle at the Badia instead of the government's original wish and plan. It then set to restore the Badia with utmost care to its original and actual splendour. Without the continuing generosity of following Italian governments the development we commemorate today would not have happened. Neither would the installation at the Badia have taken place without the good will shown by the then resident Scolopi Fathers who still share the Badia with the Institute.

[7] Permit me to make a very few exceptions to the self-imposed rule not to mention anyone especially. I do want to mention two men who are no longer with us. The first one is Ambassador Cattani. He may well be the only person who, during the 21 years that separated the original proposal made by the German delegation at the Conference of Messina in 1955, during all those years never gave up to push for the realization of the proposal. The second one is Marcello Buzzonetti, the Institute's first Secretary General. Without his finesse d'esprit and his total devotion to the Institute the final launching of it might well never have taken place. Forgive me also if I mention the names of two people, happily still present here today. I mentioned them twenty five years ago as examples to us all for their

constant good humour, gentleness and presence at work from early morning to late in the evening. One, our first portiere Gastone, and the second his wife Marisa who looked after the very young children of some of our students in order to enable them to concentrate on their studies.

[8] At a birthday party one normally takes part and brings a present. Not being present, may I turn this around and express two wishes? The first one: that the Institute's authorities commission a full-blown history of the European University Institute from its inception at Messina in 1955 until the end of the actual President's tenure. The development of the Institute definitively deserves this to be done! My second and last wish goes back to a regret I mentioned 25 years ago. It concerned the absence of a professorial post in the Institute for philosophy. From time to time one of the departments helped through an appointment to at least partly deal with this lacuna - or, if by a happy coincidence a philosopher happened to become the Institute's President!

[9] Probably the most important problem our world is now faced with is world order and world governance. It seems to me that political philosophy has a contribution to make in dealing with this problem. It should do this both through studying what philosophers of the past and present have written about the political consequences of their thinking and in exploring new ways of thinking and acting about this central problem now facing us all. This seems to me even more necessary now.

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I thank you for your kindness for listening for a moment to someone who would have loved to be with you today.

[10] Sadly one of the former Presidents of the Institute, Emile Noël died a few years ago but I am glad to welcome his widow Madame Gobeil Noël here today. Emile Noël will have been well known personally and by repute to our many distinguished visitors here today. I wish to pay a special tribute to his memory and to record the crucial role he played in developing the specifically European focus of so much of the research at the Institute and in developing relations of mutual regard and cooperation between the Institute as an autonomous research resource for Europe and the evolving institutions of the European Union.

[11] The research at the Institute speaks for itself and needs no praise from me. Therefore I will confine myself on this happy occasion to just one reflection, namely that over and above the splendid research achievement there is a personal enrichment of people at the Institute which constitutes a precious European added value.

[12] We hear much talk today in these difficult times of the clash of cultures and civilizations. I would like to record that the experience here at the Institute gives living evidence that, while respecting diversity, a fruitful level of overlapping cultural consensus is not only possible but can actually be achieved and with most beneficial results. Young researchers coming from Budapest, Berlin, Paris, Dublin, Stockholm, Madrid, the U.S., Africa, Australia and Asia arrive with very diverse culturally embedded frameworks of human experience, value systems and norms of rational enquiry. They come here to what is not any one of these frameworks but rather a pilgrim province of the mind. They find that alternative viewpoints, outlooks and approaches are not just a threat but more profoundly, a challenge, and a possibility of a new comparative way of addressing an issue. They experience not just the possibility but the achieved reality of overlapping cultural consensus - achieved not without difficulty but with great benefit. In this work and experience virtues of tolerance, mutual respect and openness to the value of the Other are pre-reflectively absorbed and consciously developed. This is the real European added value of our experience at the Institute, and the evidence of it is all around you. It provides hope that, on a wider scale, the much-reported clash of cultures and civilizations is not the inevitable end-product of current tensions, but a new opportunity for dialogue and exploration. It provides hope that a fruitful consensus is an achievable ideal.

[13] The European University Institute, together with other universities in many other countries, has a significant role to play in this, our common task. Without doubt, this is the confident birthday message that the Institute has for the wider community on its 25th anniversary.