

**Opening speech by the Chairman of the Financial and  
Budgetary Committee of the NC SR**

**Mr. LADISLAV KAMENICKÝ**

Your Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

Please allow me to begin my opening speech - as the host of the Interparliamentary Conference and welcome you in Slovakia and in Bratislava, which, under the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union is at the centre of European attention.

A warm welcome, here, at the Bratislava Castle, dear friends.

Let me emphasize, that the Union is facing a number of crises simultaneously. The crisis of confidence is one of them. Therefore, one of the fundamental objectives of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union, not only in the context of the negative outcome of the referendum in UK, is to strengthen the citizens' confidence in the European project.

The consequences of the financial and economic crisis and the uncertainty in the social sphere are in fact still very noticeable. Our economies are growing very slowly, and the number of people, especially the young ones, who cannot find a fulltime job, is still very high. The persistent unemployment and social injustice are the challenges, we face together. It is essential that we work together to find fair solutions.

The Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union has set four main priorities in its program. (1) the *Modern single market*, which includes the project of the Energy Union, and the concept of the *Digital single market*, (2) a *Sustainable immigration and asylum policy*, aimed on a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the immigration crisis, (3) a *Globally engaged Europe*, and finally (4) an *Economically strong Europe*, which will be the main focus of this conference.

If we want to live in a prosperous Europe, we need to maintain and strengthen the European social model, despite the pressure of economic globalization. We must fight together at the European level against tax evasion in order to finance this unique model.

It is necessary to discuss the next steps regarding the fiscal pillar of the EMU together, in particular with regards to developing common macroeconomic stabilisation tools. An Unemployment Insurance Scheme for the Euro Area is exactly such a tool.

Last but not least, based on the European Fund for Strategic Investments, we need a common investment program of the European Union, which should serve as a tool for macroeconomic stabilisation at the time of symmetric shocks.

Based on the above mentioned, please let me say a few words about the main topics of the conference.

The first topic is *The strengthening of the social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union*. The Economic and Monetary Union currently still remains an unfinished project.

I believe that strengthening the European pillar of social rights as part of the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union will lead to a better management of economic shocks with negative social consequences, and will also contribute to better performance and stability of the European economy and significantly strengthen the citizens' confidence in the European project.

The process of dismantling the European social model, reducing the previously acquired social and democratic rights is dangerous, and can only lead to the disintegration of the European project.

It is therefore urgent to improve the coordination of employment and social policy, and at the same time fully respect national competences, the role of the social partners and social dialogue.

Mrs. Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility will hold the keynote speech about the Strengthening of the social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union.

The second topic of the conference is the *Fight against Tax Evasion in the European Union*, which is one of the priority areas of the Commission's Work Programme for 2016, and also one of the priorities of the Slovak Presidency. The fight against tax evasion, tax avoidance and aggressive tax planning is, and will remain a European priority, but it is very important to strive to make it a global priority.

I am convinced, that the fight against tax avoidance of legal entities is a part of the effort that will lead to fair and effective taxation in the European Union, and that these efforts will contribute to the stabilisation of the economic and tax environment, and to a greater transparency in the business sector. On this matter, the renowned expert on taxes, Professor *Prem Sikka* from the United Kingdom, will hold the keynote speech.

The third topic of the conference is called *Automatic Stabilisers as a Building Block of the Fiscal Union Architecture*. Our goal is to focus on the issue of building a fiscal pillar of the Economic and Monetary Union, and in particular to launch a debate about the possibilities of creating common European stabilisation instruments, such as the European Unemployment Insurance System, which in the future could help cushion the negative impact of asymmetrical shocks and economic fluctuations in Europe. The keynote speaker on this subject is the Professor of Economics at the Corvinus University of Budapest and the former European Commissioner (for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) – *Mr. László Andor*.

The fourth and final topic of our plenary session will be *The Common Investment Programme as a tool for Macroeconomic Stabilisation in the European Union*, based on the fact that the European Union and its Member States need to continue their efforts to boost investment in the European area.

The European Fund for Strategic Investments - EFSI, has proved to be a very effective and efficient tool to increase the rate of investment in the European Union. Therefore, I believe it should be the basis for the creation of a more ambitious Common Investment Programme of the European Union.

The European economy needs a new investment boost towards a sustainable and inclusive economic growth and social development through creation of new job opportunities.

A favourable investment and business environment is crucial for the development and implementation of the uniting European projects. These are the key pillars of a modern single market and Economic and Monetary Union. On this matter, *Mr. Peter Kažimír*, The Minister of Finance of the Slovak Republic and the Chair of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council will hold his presentation as the keynote speaker.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased, that we can welcome several prominent speakers from the European Commission, as well as from the relevant committees of the European Parliament, the national parliaments of the Member States of the European Union, the Slovak Ministry of Finance, but also a number of renowned speakers from European think-tanks and academia. I believe our meeting at the conference will bring many interesting findings and will contribute and enrich the debate on the prospects not only of Economic and Monetary Union, but also of our common European project itself.

I would like to end my speech with a few brief remarks. Let me remind you, that the main impetus for the start of the Interparliamentary conferences organized by the Presiding countries was in the past the effort to strengthen the role of national parliaments of EU Member States and the European Parliament in shaping EU policies in various areas.

As national MPs and MEPs elected in democratic and free elections, we not only have the right, but above all, the responsibility to participate in shaping the European debate on financial and economic matters, eliminating the democratic deficit within the decision-making on EU policies.

It is therefore necessary to understand each other, communicate, create platforms for cooperation, build constructive and effective dialogue and find common, consensual and the best possible solutions that contribute to improving the economic and monetary situation in the European Union, and thus improve the lives of people in our European community.

Thank you very much for your attention.