



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

ADDRESS
BY PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
AND PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL JANEZ JANŠA
AT THE CEREMONY HELD ON THE OCCASION OF MALTA'S ADOPTION OF THE EURO
(Valletta, 12 January 2008)

*Mr. President of the Republic and Mrs. Fenech-Adami,
President of the European Commission,
Vice-President of the European Parliament,
Colleagues Prime Ministers,
President of the European Central Bank,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a great honour and a genuine pleasure to be here with you today. Today, as you bid farewell to your national currency – the Maltese lira – and welcome the new, the single currency we share – the euro. I can well appreciate and understand your feelings at this historic moment, since it is only a year ago that Slovenia – like Malta today – was welcoming the arrival of the euro.

The introduction of the euro is a demanding project. I understand that you have encountered many obstacles when pursuing this course, among which reducing public debt undoubtedly represented a particularly significant challenge. Turning to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Dr Gonzi, on this great and important achievement. Frank Lloyd Wright once said, "The thing always happens that you really believe in; and the belief in a thing makes it happen." I would also like to extend my sincere congratulations to the Maltese Government and to all the citizens of Malta who believed that the path to monetary union is also the path to a goal which can be achieved and is worth achieving.

The introduction of the single European currency is an important step forward in the process of European integration. The motifs on the national side of the euro coins symbolise courage and the love of peace, two characteristics which you, the inhabitants of Malta, have demonstrated time and again throughout history. Indeed, it was the Maltese who, with their unbreakable spirit, commitment and courage, helped to tip the scales in favour of the Allies in the Second World War.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today Malta and Slovenia are part of a monetary system which, by virtue of its size and the stability policies of its members, is more responsive to global economic developments. A total 320 million people now live in the euro area. Each and every one of us benefits from this union.

Trade between euro area countries increased considerably after the introduction of the euro. With its high level of exports, the euro area remains one of the most open economies in the world. A stable economic

environment means reduced risk, lower operational costs and increased security. All these are major advantages for the economy as well as for consumers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Beverly Sills once said, "There are no shortcuts to any place worth going." However, the road to Economic and Monetary Union has not been an easy one. The path has been strewn with obstacles in the form of world recession, oil crises, economic crises and other sources of instability. Although they were postponing union, these difficulties nevertheless reminded us time and again of the importance and advantages of European integration. Not only did the countries of Western Europe succeed in laying solid foundations for the European Union of today, but they even managed, irrespective of the old divisions, to invite others, including former communist countries, to join Europe's economic and monetary community, for which we are truly grateful. And so we should be, because this was a wise and courageous decision. It was not just the result of sober political reflection. It was also a direct expression of the good in humanity, a great victory of responsibility over indifference, a huge demonstration of solidarity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If Portugal concluded its EU Council Presidency in the finest way by extending the Schengen border to Malta, Slovenia and other new Member States of the European Union, Slovenia is beginning its EU Council Presidency in the finest way by welcoming Malta and Cyprus into the European Monetary Union. It is my hope that the number of countries in the euro area will increase further in 2009, starting with Slovakia, since it means a more stable environment and, consequently, greater prosperity for all the citizens of Europe.

In distant 1844, the most celebrated Slovenian poet, France Prešeren, wrote *A Toast*, a famous poem whose seventh stanza is now the national anthem of the Republic of Slovenia. He was a sensitive soul writing about nations longing for freedom and peace. His faith and hope that the time would come when, as he said, "No war, no strife shall hold its sway; who long to see that all men free, no more shall foes, but neighbours be!", seem like an early anticipation of the united Europe, which is now a reality. Please allow me, Prime Minister, on this solemn occasion to present you at the end of my speech with Slovenian euro coin featuring France Prešeren, as a token of our appreciation. In the hope that our guiding light will always be the shared values of the European Union, which attribute top priority to the freedom of individuals, their safety and hope of tomorrow.

Once again I offer my sincere congratulations and wish you welcome to the euro area.

Thank you.