

Estoril Political Forum 2018  
Patriotism, Cosmopolitanism & Democracy

Konrad Adenauer Memorial Dinner

Speech:

Dr. Wilhelm Hofmeister, Director, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Spain and Portugal

Dear Professor Isabel Capelo Gil, Rector of the Catholic University of Portugal,

Dear Prof. Joao Espada,

Dear Prof. Rita Brito,

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to express in the name of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung one more time our thanks for giving us the opportunity to partner the Estoril Political Forum. I think all of us will confirm that the Forum is an outstanding and stimulating meeting of exchange on very relevant topics of European and international affairs.

I also would like to thank you for dedicating the last dinner to the memory of Konrad Adenauer. Konrad Adenauer has been the founding father of post II world war Germany, first, as the President of the Parliamentarian Assembly of West Germany which drafted the Basic Law, the constitution of the Federal Republic, in 1948/49; and from September 1949 onwards, at the age of 73, for 14 years he became the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic until October 1963. Adenauer, however, was not only the main architect of the reconstruction of modern Germany. He did build this country on an essential corner stone, and that is the European integration. For Adenauer the construction of a democratic state on German soil which would live in peace and harmony with its neighbors was closely linked to close cooperation and integration with its European neighbors, especially with France. Therefore, Adenauer also became one of the main architects of the European integration process, of course together with others like Robert Schuman from France and Alcide de Gasperi from Italy.

It is worth to remember the efforts and courage of Adenauer and the other founding fathers of the European integration process especially in these days when the EU is facing a serious moment which means not less than a challenge of its founding spirit and principles and its main achievements over the last 70 years.

This may sound a little bit dramatic and not very appropriate in a moment when we close this meeting with a dinner party and wait for the Lisbon swingers to entertain us. Nevertheless, I cannot but call your attention for a moment to the challenge we face in Europe. I do so not at least because we celebrate this evening together with many young people who will overtake responsibility in many places in a near future. I think they – this means you, the younger participants of the Forum – have to be aware that Europe is a precious achievement and that you should care about it because it is the best we have achieved in our European history. More than 70 years of peace and stability, prosperity and social security, if not for all but for an always growing number of people in 28 states of the European Union. This has been possible because the members of the Union have opened their borders, did allow the flow of goods, services and people, and because a spirit of solidarity and belonging allowed to overcome national egoisms and find solutions which are beneficial for most if not all of its members.

Tomorrow, the leaders of the EU member states will meet and we will see whether they are able to respect the principles and the spirit of the Union and to find a solution for the new challenges.

You all know, that the main challenge for the European Union actually is how to deal with the growing number of migrants from other regions. You also know that the actual internal debate in Germany is one of the main reasons for the actual critical situation regarding the migration issue, but it is not the only or the main cause for the problem.

In my point of view, the main cause for the actual problem has a lot to do with “Patriotism, cosmopolitanism and democracy” the topic of our Forum. I think we should understand that patriotism and cosmopolitanism are the both sides of a very precious coin which is our democracy. Patriotism is a sense of belonging to a community, this can be a

national community, but also a local or even a supranational community for instance in a sense of European patriotism. Patriotism must not be confused with nationalism which believes that the closing up of a nation and the concentration on itself would enable a country to better face the challenges of our times. This is at least naïve, and in combination with populism it is even dangerous for national democracy and prosperity. Patriotism of our days instead of closing up needs a dose of cosmopolitanism, this is the acknowledgement of the grown interdependence and that we can only pursue our own interests when we share and pursue them in cooperation with other likeminded states. Konrad Adenauer did understand this relationship very well. He knew that Germany would only be able to reconstruct the country after the war when we would share interest and policies with our neighbors. Others, and especially the leaders and the people of France had the same understanding. As winners of the war they were able to overcome the old grievances and conflicts with Germany and share the same ideas with Adenauer and Germany.

Only this spirit can help resolving the actual such called refugee and migration crisis which indeed is a serious challenge for the European Union. I cannot go into details of the many aspects of this crisis, now. I only want to make three points:

First, from all what we can foresee, a rapid decline of the flow of migrants and refugees is not to be expected. Although the total number of migrants to Europe has decreased since 2015, the average number continues to be high or even increasing lately, and the management of migrants and refugees will continue to preoccupy the EU. This also does mean to acknowledge that the EU is not able to receive and accommodate all who want to come. Therefore, migration into the EU must be controlled.

Second, since the beginning of the migration and refugee crisis, the EU has made considerable progress with short-term crisis management in particular. The creation of the European Border and Coast Guard, hotspots as well as the cooperation with third countries, can be mentioned. Such measures adopted over the past few years have bought the EU some time and the number of migrants and refugees who arrived in Europe has declined since 2015 in a considerable number. But it is imperative that we now come to determine long-term reforms beyond short-term crisis management.

We urgently need an agreement on how to reform the Common European Asylum System and the EU financial framework must provide far more resources for migration policy – in particular also for the control of external borders.

Third, all EU member countries must acknowledge that migration and asylum is an issue of common concern and can only be managed in cooperation and solidarity among all member states of the EU. Unfortunately, some states give the impression that they do not want to participate in none of the measures to handle this challenge, or by receiving an appropriate number of refugees or by sharing the costs for accommodating migrants in the EU and protecting the external borders. This lack of solidarity can harm the EU seriously. I think the confusion between patriotism and nationalism and especially a populist kind of nationalism contributes to this negative attitude of some EU member states to share the costs of the migration crisis.

Unfortunately, I have to admit that also in my own country we can observe this misunderstanding of patriotism in our days. And it is not only the right wing nationalist party Alternative für Deutschland, but even some of those who are committed to the heritage of Konrad Adenauer who seem to forget for a moment what patriotism really meant for him.

The point of conflict is whether Germany should reject those migrants who had been registered as refugees in other EU countries already and those who had been deported from Germany already and are not allowed to return. The minister of interior proposed to start border controls, mainly at the borders with Austria. The legal situation in the EU is not 100 percent clear and there may be a legal base for such rejection. Altogether, this measure would affect probably around 3.000 to 4.000 people this year. In relation to the overall number of migrants to Germany this number is relatively low.

To give you an idea on the issue of asylum in Germany here some numbers:

Asylum applications in Germany 2015: 476.649, 2016: 745.000, 2017: 222.683, 2018: 78.026.

Decisions on applications in 2016: 695.000, 2017: 603.000, 2018: 210.000.

The average rate of recognition is 30%.

The number of deportations lies at around 25.000 per year in 2016 and 2017. This means that most of those whose application has been rejected and are supposed to leave the country still remain in Germany.

Chancellor Angela Merkel does reject the unilateral closure of German borders because this would be a serious setback for the European Union and she understands this measure as a violation of European law. I support this view because in my understanding open borders within Europe are not only an achievement but one of the main principles of the Union. We should not question that. If Germany would close its borders without a broader agreement with its neighbors about border management, others will do the same (and some do it already: Sweden, Denmark, even France rejected last year about 50.000 illegal migrants at its border with Italy). However, when Germany introduces border controls, southern European countries and specially Italy probably would suspend the registration of migrants and refugees and they then would arrive at German borders. In this case, we could not deny entrance for people who apply for asylum without a legal procedure. Rejecting these people would be a serious violation of our constitution in a nationalist attitude and this means a violation of our democratic rules. One can see how fast nationalism can harm democracy.

Nevertheless, it is not easy to settle this conflict within the German government. The minister of interior still threatens to decide the closure of the borders if the European Council will not produce some clear decision on the future management of the migration issue. If he will take such a decision, we will have a serious crisis of government which will not only be a problem for Germany but for the whole EU.

So we I have to see whether the European leaders will make some real progress in the urgently needed common policies to face increased migration and also to manage a better protection of European borders. On Friday, we probably will not see very comprehensive conclusions or agreements on this issue, but hopefully some signals that agreements are possible.

If the leaders will let themselves be guided by the spirit of Robert Schuman, Alcides de Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer and also not to forget Winston Churchill who has been

a spiritus rector of European integration, than they will find a solution for the actual challenges.

My thanks are to the Estoril Political Forum and its organizers for keeping alive the memory of these leaders because they can still help us to find solutions for the problems of our times.

Well, as long as we do not know if our leaders will be inspired by their predecessors, actually we cannot do much more but enjoy this evening.

Thank you very much for your attention.