

Speech by Josep Borrell delivered on the afternoon of 16 December 2009

There is a saying in Spain that goes “May God deliver us from the day of praises” (“*día de las alabanzas*”), when everyone recognises our merits and even our fiercest critics recognise in us virtues which they had previously denied we possessed.

This moment normally comes when we set off on our journey towards eternity, and in that case the praises are even more enthusiastic, or to embark on a new stage in our lives.

Today is, dear Professor Mény, your day of praises, not because you have died, but because your long and fruitful years at the helm of the European University Institute in Florence have come to an end. And the weighty responsibility of continuing your work falls to me, and it will not be easy if, at the end of it, I am judged by comparison with what Professor Mény did for this Institute.

The praise you receive today is well-earned. The distinguished participants at this meeting, the academic corps of the Institute and the representatives of the Member States know well that Professor Mény has devoted a significant part of his life to this institution and his achievements are impressive.

One thing is certain, the EUI owes a great deal to Yves Mény. Under his leadership, important major changes have been achieved. The broadening and consolidation of the Ph.D. programme, the development of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Research, the launching of the postdoctoral programme, and the buildings added to the Institute campus, are but a few of the achievements of this Presidency which has drawn to a close.

These are all great results, and I am convinced that following the lines set out during the Mény presidency will bring further success.

I will try to do this. I will try to continue the work carried out by Professor Mény and you can be sure of my strong commitment to this task. But it would be impossible for me to be Professor Mény the Second, because his experience and the long time working at the EUI are unrepeatable. And continuity does not mean a path which excludes any changes. But any change has to be framed in the search for excellence for the Institute: excellence in teaching, excellence in supervision, excellence in infrastructure and in administrative services.

During the procedure which led to my being appointed as Prof. Mény’s successor, I met some members of the EUI academic community and presented an outline of some ideas to strengthen the future of the Institute. There will be time and more suitable occasions to discuss these further, but here and now I would like to make it clear that some of the most important future developments of the Institute, such as the global governance programme, were conceived by Professor Mény.

That is why my gratitude to him is not only for what he has done, but also for the ideas that he has transferred to me on what we can do in the future, in line with what Max Weber said 90 years ago when he said that: “the very *meaning* of scientific work...Every scientific 'fulfilment' raises new 'questions'; it *asks* to be 'surpassed' and

outdated...We cannot work without hoping that others will advance further than we have. In principle, this progress goes on endlessly”

However, the process of European integration, of which this Institute is one of the success stories, is faced with new questions and challenges. These are times of uncertainty and problems for the most ambitious historical project of pacification and integration of European peoples, and in the EUI, too, we need to devote a proportion of our intellectual efforts to this project. Scientific work is chained to the course of progress and much decision-making can benefit from the intellectual capacities present in this institution.

The tension and the dialogue between science as a vocation and science as ‘applicable knowledge’ should remain a central feature of the Institute’s activities.

We must be aware of the fact that climate change, growing competition from emerging economies, mass migration, energy and food crises, trade and financial liberalization, international terrorism and rising inequality are transforming the lifestyles of European citizens and opening windows of opportunity for us to tackle these global challenges successfully. The European Union can find therein a new core purpose, a new life force and a new stimulus to mobilize its intellectual resources, such as those within our European University Institute.

The complexity which is part and parcel of the current process of globalization is challenging prevalent paradigms and theories in social sciences, calling for additional intellectual efforts. New problems have arisen; for example the notion of civilization is being used to explain some of the emerging conflicts, and regulation at the international level being adopted as a strategy to resolve the current economic crisis.

In this context, I believe that the EUI should increasingly bind its European identity to the new questions and opportunities posed by a globalized world. After all, when the Institute was created, Europe was not planning to be the global player it wants to become today as a condition for its survival.

In the same way, the EUI, which is simultaneously an international organization and a European university the strength of which lies in its multinational and multicultural environment, must preserve and further develop this important asset. We must be considered as the European University, where European and international issues are handled.

Today more than ever, the EUI must try to combine these two aspects: internationalization and Europe. In other words, without losing its European character, and even developing it further, the EUI should strive for more internationalization. This means that its membership, main research interests and affiliation should remain European, but in an ever more global perspective. And, at the same time, the EUI should be the top place for researchers of European issues worldwide. This means that we must continue to broaden the recruitment of Ph.D. researchers to non-European students.

As Professor Mény has said many times, the core business of the EUI is its doctoral programme and so it must continue to be. But we have also to be aware that when the

EUI was created, there was very little competition from other universities in the field of doctoral programmes focusing on European affairs. Nowadays the picture has completely changed. The Institute is facing, and continues to face, tough competition from other universities. The Institute must develop further research and study activities which distinguish it as a particularly high-quality environment. In this sense, both the work of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Research and the postdoctoral Max Weber programme as well as the forthcoming global governance programme, are fundamental elements for the future of the Institute. In each one of them, Professor Mény will have left his own personal mark, and I undertake to continue to promote them.

The international dimension must be coupled with the European one. This is a very important aspect. This is exactly what I plan to do. Being a “European” institution, giving priority to European affairs and strengthening ties with Brussels are essential from many points of view: institutional, academic, budgetary, not to mention that of the Historical Archives, which are managed by the Institute thanks to a financial contribution from the EU.

And I know that you consider me a President who has the potential to contribute to closer ties with the EU Institutions. I sincerely hope to do so.

Let me say a few words on the administration. One of the keys to excellence is an efficient infrastructure and a service-oriented administration. President Mény has worked a lot on this and the result, from what I understand, certainly seems satisfactory. My commitment will be to continue along this path, making sure that the administration maintains its high standards. I know that I will be able to count on very professional collaborators in this respect, and this gives me the tranquillity which is necessary to concentrate on strategic issues.

As regards facilities, a lot has been achieved under the Presidency of my predecessor and what we need now is consolidation. Tomorrow we will have the pleasure of inaugurating a new prestigious seat of the EUI. Let me take this opportunity to remind you all of the very substantial and concrete contribution by the Italian government to the EUI. These beautiful premises that host the Institute have been put at our disposal by the hosting state, and we are grateful for this endeavour.

And so to conclude, many thanks once again to President Mény for leaving me an efficient and world-class institution to lead. Thank you too to all those who have contributed with their daily work to the success of Professor Mény’s tenure and to those whom I am asking as of now to contribute to ensuring that when my day of praise comes, we can leave an equally good state of affairs.

Time flies and this day will come soon. In the words of the great Spanish poet Antonio Machado, *“todo pasa y todo queda, pero lo nuestro es pasar, pasar haciendo caminos”* - all things pass and all things remain, but our destiny is to pass on, to pass on opening new roads ...

Roads that lead us to who knows where – we cannot even imagine where. When, almost ten years ago, Professor Mény welcomed me as a fellow to the Robert Schuman Centre,

of which he was then the Director, neither he nor I could have imagined that on a day like today he would be handing over the Presidency of the Institute to me.

And yet here we are, and for me it is an honour and a responsibility, which I hope to live up to as worthily and with the same skill as Professor Mény has.

On behalf of all the members of this academic community, my thanks to Professor Mény and I hope to continue to develop the EUI through continuation of his good practices and innovations.