



A TOAST PROPOSED BY

Zoran Milanović
PRIME MINISTER OF
THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

AND

Ivo Josipović
PRESIDENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

THE DINNER OFFERED
ON THE OCCASION OF THE ACCESSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Zoran Milanović
PRIME MINISTER OF
THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be able to welcome you and propose a toast in Zagreb, the capital of the Republic of Croatia, the twenty-eighth member state of the European Union. I am grateful to you for having come to share the important moment which sees the accomplishment, or the beginning of it, of our highest political and social ideals. Your presence makes us particularly proud and inspires me to see the glass I raise tonight, with even more confidence, half-full, not half-empty.

I raise this glass to toast Croatia's openness to Europe and the world. In the European and world context we represent a small number, which is inversely proportionate to the size of our dream of full freedom for every individual. That is our strongest link to the world of progressive ideas, and was always the most reliable channel that brought in the influences that changed this country for the better.

I raise this glass in an invitation to resist fearmongers who spread fear of 'others', of those who are different. That is how we, in essence, understand Europe: a pure heart, not fear, cooperation, not suspicion, acceptance, not closing in a ghetto, trying to understand, without accusing in advance, getting to know, without persisting in prejudice.

And, finally, I raise this glass in the name of our common future and our shared courage, in the face of numerous challenges of our time, to keep a deep awareness of the irreplaceability of fundamental values, like solidarity and education. This awareness is the only guarantee of having selected the right path to take us to a happier society and a more meaningful living.

Thank you, and here's to your health!

Ivo Josipović

PRESIDENT OF

THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Your Excellencies,

Presidents of States, Speakers of Parliaments

and Prime Ministers,

High-ranking Representatives of the European Union,

Ministers,

Representatives of our Friendly Countries,

Officials of the Republic of Croatia,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the history of a nation, there are few events such as this one that the citizens of the Republic of Croatia are celebrating today. This is not only a political dream of a generation of politicians of the new Croatian state coming true. The accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union is confirmation of our citizens' conviction that each one of us belongs to the European democratic and cultural circle and the European set of values.

Therefore, today I am filled with pride and satisfaction and confident that the citizens of the Republic of Croatia share the same emotions.

The Croatian reality, regardless of nuances in which we perceive it, is today completely different from what it was when we set out on the path of independence and building our own state. It is this reality that we are proudly celebrating today.

From the very beginning, the accession to the European Union was a firmly defined objective. It motivated many to invest all their creativity and strength in its implementation, on which full political consensus was achieved. A large number of people acted in concert in order to bring about significant changes in the legal and value system of our state and society.

It is up to us now to get new forces moving. Building on the changes we have made on our European path, they will prove that the undertaking has been worth the effort.

Distinguished guests!

First, I am addressing representatives of the EU member states, our new family. I wish to thank each one of you personally for the efforts that your respective states have made to assist the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union in different ways. Your enthusiasm was proof of your political determination to support a young state that was persistently working on changes necessary for its becoming the 28th member of the community. Thank you! I also thank your citizens who, in this sensitive time, supported our membership.

We are bound by unbreakable geographic and historical links with many EU member states. My message tonight is that good-neighbourliness and friendship will lastingly determine our relations. We will continue being connected through our shared destiny within the EU.

This is an opportunity to express special thanks to our neighbours from the Western Balkans who have assembled here today in a large number. My message to you is: we will support your European perspective with all our forces. Croatia's interest for us all together to live in a zone of peace and progress will remain one of our most important political objectives.

*Distinguished highest representatives of
the European Union!*

Thank you for having accepted our invitation to this celebration. I understand and take it as a sign of special welcome and a pledge of our future good cooperation. You sincerely supported all our efforts and the changes made in the Republic of Croatia. I look upon the efforts, knowledge and know-how you invested with respect and gratitude. You believed in our strength and capabilities and inspired the best in us. Please convey my gratitude to all the services and experts who have supported Croatia.

Dear guests,

At the end of this toast, let me add just this. The moment of Croatia's accession to the European Union is a time of many doubts and questioning. In Croatia too, there are similar dilemmas. However, at the end of one stage in Croatia's history and at the beginning of a new, European age for us, there is a prevailing conviction in Croatia that the project of the European Union is a project of the future. We look to Europe as a new opportunity to achieve new democratic, political, cultural and any other progress.

I raise this glass to a Europe of the future, a Europe of peace and prosperity!

Cheers!