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'20 YEARS SINCE THE ACCESSION OF 10 STATES TO THE EUROPEAN UNION: A NEW CONSTITUTIONAL MOMENT FOR EUROPE', COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, LUXEMBOURG, 3 MAY 2024

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS TOGETHER

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Thank you very much Judge Ziemele. Before I begin, I would like to thank you, as the President of the working group, as well as the other members of that group, for having organised this conference. I am very grateful to you, to Advocate General Szpunar and to Judges Ilešič, Passer, Marcoulli, Škvařilová-Pelzl and Tóth as well as to Registrar Calot Escobar for the efforts you have put in preparing this interesting programme.

Today, gathered here in this esteemed company, we embark on a journey of celebration. We celebrate the 20th anniversary of the accession of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia to the European Union. It was the largest single enlargement and one that marked a significant constitutional moment in the history of European integration.

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Let us not forget that 1 May 2004 represented the fulfilment of a struggle for freedom, justice and democracy that was six decades in the making, becoming unstoppable in 1989 with the Solidarity movement, the Baltic Chain, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the Velvet Revolution. What united that generation of Europeans was their unbreakable resolve to tear down the Iron Curtain, which had immersed them in the darkness of authoritarian rule since the end of World War II. Similarly, as the example of the former Yugoslavia shows, peace amongst European States cannot be taken for granted yet, as a peace project, the EU demonstrates that war amongst its Member States is simply unimaginable. In addition, prosperity and growth are incompatible with an 'island mentality'. Instead, it is better to build bridges with neighbouring societies that share and cherish the same values.

Above all, the 2004 accession put to rest the idea of a divided Europe. The European family was again reunited in a project that revolves around building together a 'common legal order' based on the values of democracy, freedom and justice.[1] From a Union of 15, the EU became a Union of 25. That enlargement required new institutional arrangements that were introduced by the Treaty of Nice.

The Court of Justice of the European Union (the 'Court of Justice') and the General Court also had to adapt to this new reality. Nine new units were created at the translation directorate and 10 new cabinets were established respectively at the Court of Justice and at the General Court. I cherish fond memories of that time, as I was excited to make the acquaintance of my new colleagues. Former President Skouris had put in place a 'peer orientation programme', in which judges of the former EU-15 were to welcome the ten new judges, many of whom are here with us today. I was lucky enough to welcome those judges and, in particular, to be the peer of Judge Endre Juhász, with whom I became close friends. As Judge Ilešič will later share with you, that programme was a success as the new judges quickly adapted to the 'ways' of the Court of Justice.

The EU not only grew in size but also in diversity. Notably, it went from 12 official languages to 21 official languages. The principle of linguistic equality is ensured both at Treaty level and at the level of secondary EU legislation. The need to protect that equality was examined by the Court of Justice soon after the 2004 accession in the famous ***Skoma-lux*** judgment, a reference made by the District Court of Ostrava.[2] The Court of Justice held that a Regulation that imposes obligations on individuals but has not been published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* in the official language of the Member State concerned cannot be enforced against individuals in that Member State. In that regard, the Court held – and I quote – that 'it would be contrary to the principle of equal treatment to apply obligations imposed by [EU] legislation in the same way in the old Member States, where individuals have the opportunity to acquaint themselves with those obligations in the *Official Journal of the European Union* in the languages of those States, and in the new Member States, where it was impossible to learn of those obligations because of late publication'.[3]

Similarly, in the more recent case law, the Court of Justice has held that 'one language version of a provision of EU law cannot serve as the sole basis for the interpretation of that provision or be made to override the other language versions'.[4] By upholding the principle of

[1] Judgments of 16 February 2022, *Hungary v Parliament and Council*, C-156/21, EU:C:2022:97, para. 127, and of 16 February 2022, *Poland v Parliament and Council*, C-157/21, EU:C:2022:98, para. 145.
[2] Judgment of 11 December 2007, *Skoma-Lux*, C-161/06, EU:C:2007:773.
[3] *Ibid*., para. 39.
[4] Judgment of 6 October 2021, *Consorzio Italian Management and Catania Multiservizi*, C-561/19, EU:C:2021:799, para. 43.

linguistic equality, the EU protects and promotes the national identity of every Member State. As a matter of fact, the link between protection for the official language of a Member State and its national identity was explicitly recognised by the Court of Justice in the ***Runevič-Vardyn*** and ***Cilevičs*** judgments,[5] involving, respectively, a reference made by the First District Court of the City of Vilnius and the Latvian Constitutional Court.

In the EU legal order, the importance of national identity is not limited to protecting the official languages of the Member States, given that, as Article 4(2) TEU states, it also guarantees their fundamental structures and essential functions. The EU is not a State,[6] nor does it seek to become one. On the contrary, it serves to protect the Member States' statehood by creating a 'pool of sovereignty' amongst them. Member States become stronger together, since they can achieve goals that would be unachievable acting alone.

The protection of national identity is of paramount importance for States that have lived under Soviet occupation or that were within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine has resurrected old demons, showing that the threat of military aggression against the EU exists. That is why the EU and its Member States must be able to defend themselves effectively. In that regard, the case law of the Court of Justice shows that it takes national identity very seriously. Notably, in the seminal ***Ministrstvo za obrambo***,[7] the Slovenian Supreme Court asked the Court of Justice whether members of the armed forces were subject to the Working Time Directive.[8] By interpreting that Directive in the light of Article 4(2) TEU, the Court found that it does not apply to a member of military personnel where he or she performs an activity that is carried out in the context of exceptional events, which require the adoption of measures that are indispensable for the protection of the community at large. Following all the rules in the directive could put the effectiveness of such measures at risk. Whilst having due regard to the fundamental right to a limitation of maximum working hours and to daily and weekly rest enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the 'Charter'),[9] the Court of Justice nevertheless emphasised the need to protect the essential State functions of safeguarding national security and preserving territorial integrity, which are carried out by the armed forces of the Member States.

To some extent, the same reasoning can be found in ***Baltic Media Alliance***,[10] in which the Regional Administrative Court of Vilnius asked the Court of Justice to interpret the Audiovisual Media Services Directive.[11] In that case, the Court of Justice interpreted that directive in a way that enabled the Lithuanian authorities to combat Russian propaganda targeting the Russian-speaking minority in that Member State, whilst upholding the application of the country of origin principle. This meant, in concrete terms, that those authorities could oblige media providers to distribute a channel broadcast by a UK-based

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[5] Judgments of 12 May 2011, *Runevič-Vardyn and Wardyn*, C-391/09, EU:C:2011:291, and of 7 September 2022, *Cilevičs and Others*, C-391/20, EU:C:2022:638.

[6] Opinion 2/13 (Accession of the European Union to the ECHR) of 18 December 2014, EU:C:2014:2454, para. 156 ('the EU is, under international law, precluded by its very nature from being considered a State.')

[7] Judgment of 15 July 2021, *Ministrstvo za obrambo*, C-742/19, EU:C:2021:597.

[8] Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time, [2003] OJ L 299/9.

[9] See Article 31(2) of the Charter.

[10] Judgment of 4 July 2019, *Baltic Media Alliance*, C-622/17, EU:C:2019:566.

[11] Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive), [2010] OJ L 95/ 1.

company only in pay-to-view packages, on the ground that its programmes incited hatred based on nationality.

Another example in this regard is ***RT France v Council***.[12] In that case, the General Court dismissed an action for annulment, brought by a media outlet that was wholly funded by the Russian State, against a Council Regulation that temporarily prohibited that media outlet from broadcasting content, on the ground that it had engaged in a propaganda campaign, targeting civil society in the EU, justifying and supporting Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. The General Court reasoned *inter alia* that the Council had limited RT France's freedom of expression in a way that was in keeping with the Charter, since the challenged Regulation pursued two legitimate aims – namely, the protection of the Union's public order and security and the application of pressure on the Russian authorities in order to bring an end to the war – whilst also complying with the principle of proportionality.

In my view, the *Baltic Media Alliance* and *RT France* judgments show that in interpreting EU law, the Court of Justice and the General Court strive to protect civil society from disinformation that can cause civil unrest and threaten the democratic process, whilst guaranteeing that any restrictions on the freedom of expression are limited to what is strictly necessary. When war is at the EU's doorstep, that protection serves to maintain law and order and safeguard national security, which are components of the Member States' essential functions and thus, of their national identities.

However, no Member State can justify a violation of the basic values and principles on which the EU is founded in the name of national identity. In the realm of the internal market, this means that protectionist measures simply have no place within the EU. That is illustrated by the seminal judgments in ***Viking*** and ***Laval***.[13] Whilst the EU protects the fundamental right to collective action and bargaining, the exercise of that right cannot lead to disproportionate restrictions on free movement rights. After the end of the transitional period laid down in the 2004 Accession Treaties, workers and companies from the ten new Member States were able to exercise their right to movement on an equal footing with workers and companies from the old Member States. Of course, as the ***Altun*** line of case law reveals,[14] taking advantage of the economic opportunities offered by the internal market does not mean that fraudulent behaviour is to be tolerated. Conversely, compliance with EU law provisions that seek to prevent such behaviour does not grant 'carte blanche' to the host Member State to impose disproportionate requirements and sanctions on companies that post workers, as the ***Čepelnik*** judgment shows.[15]

Ultimately, the very purpose of the internal market is to blur the distinctions between north and south, east and west, old and new, by bringing prosperity and growth to the EU as a whole. That is why the Member States cannot cherry-pick the internal market rules that suit their interests whilst disregarding those that do not. On the contrary, the Member States must be ready to take the rough with the smooth. For example, the new Member States cannot prevent companies from relocating to other Member States for tax optimisation purposes. The judgment of the Court in ***Polbud*** illustrates this point.[16]

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[12] Judgment of 27 July 2022, *RT France v Council*, T-125/22, EU:T:2022:483.
[13] Judgments of 11 December 2007, *International Transport Workers' Federation and Finnish Seamen's Union*, C-438/05, EU:C:2007:772, and of 18 December 2007, *Laval un Partneri*, C-341/05, EU:C:2007:809.
[14] Judgment of 6 February 2018, *Altun and Others*, C-359/16, EU:C:2018:63.
[15] Judgment of 13 November 2018, *Čepelnik*, C-33/17, EU:C:2018:896.
[16] Judgment of 25 October 2017, *Polbud - Wykonawstwo*, C-106/16, EU:C:2017:804.

Those examples show that the success of the internal market is based on working together and engaging in open competition based on innovation and know how. However, the EU is about more than ensuring a 'level playing field' in the internal market. I say this because EU integration cannot be fully understood without mentioning solidarity, which is one of the founding values of the EU. As such, it 'underpins the entire legal system of the European Union'.[17] As European integration widens and deepens, the importance of solidarity increases. Allow me to examine solidarity in light of three examples taken from the case law.

First, in the realm of the internal market, the degree of solidarity that is required of the host Member State is commensurate with the degree of integration of free movers. The more integrated an EU citizen is, the greater is the solidarity that the host Member State must display towards that citizen. In ***Jobcenter Krefeld***,[18] the Court of Justice ruled that a former migrant worker and his children – all of whom were Polish nationals and benefited from a right of residence in Germany based on the schooling of the children – could not be automatically excluded from claiming basic social benefits as provided for by German law on the ground that this worker had become unemployed. In so doing, the Court is telling the host Member State to show solidarity in accepting that the risk of a migrant worker becoming unemployed cannot be allowed to jeopardise the schooling of his or her children, if social benefits are necessary for that schooling to continue.[19]

Second, the Court of Justice and the General Court have given teeth to the principle of energy solidarity, holding that 'acts adopted by the EU institutions, including by the Commission under [the EU energy] policy, must be interpreted, and their legality assessed, in the light of that principle'.[20] In ***Germany v Poland***, this meant, in concrete terms, that, when adopting a decision that exempts a pipeline located alongside the German Eastern border (the 'OPAL pipeline') from certain requirements imposed by EU legislation on the gas market, the Commission must examine how such a decision could affect the interests, in the field of energy, of other Member States and, if so, balance those interests with the interest that that exemption has for Germany and, if relevant, the European Union.

Third and last, the 2015 refugee crisis also required the Member States to act in keeping with solidarity. It was on the basis of solidarity that the Court of Justice dismissed the actions for annulment brought respectively by Slovakia and Hungary against a Council decision establishing a mandatory relocation scheme for applicants for international protection.[21] The Court observed that the mandatory relocation scheme was founded on solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility. This meant, in essence, that where the asylum systems of certain Member States are facing serious difficulties (such as those of Greece and Italy at the time), the other Member States have a duty to help them. Solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility prevails over the views that a Member State may have on the

[17] See, to that effect, judgments of 7 February 1973, *Commission v Italy*, 39/72, EU:C:1973:13, para. 25, and of 7 February 1979, *Commission v United Kingdom*, 128/78, EU:C:1979:32, para. 12.
[18] Judgment of 6 October 2020, *Jobcenter Krefeld*, C-181/19, EU:C:2020:794.
[19] *Ibid*., para. 52. The Court of Justice's interpretation of Regulation No 492/2011 sought to ensure that 'an individual, such as JD, who intends to leave his Member State of origin, with his family, in order to travel to and work in another Member State, where he wants his children to attend school, is not exposed to the risk that, if he were to lose the status of a worker, the schooling of his children would have to be interrupted and he would have to return to his country of origin, because of his inability to claim the social benefits which the host Member State guarantees to its own nationals and which would enable his family to have sufficient means of subsistence in that Member State'.
[20] Judgment of 15 July 2021, *Germany v Poland*, C-848/19 P, EU:C:2021:598, para. 44.
[21] Judgment of 6 September 2017, *Slovakia and Hungary v Council*, C-643/15 and C-647/15, EU:C:2017:631.

question whether refugees should be welcomed or walls should be built. Whether enthusiastically or reluctantly, a Member State must fulfil its obligations under EU law by accepting the persons allocated to it by the relocation scheme.

Solidarity has also been developed by the case law of the Court of Justice in keeping with other values and principles on which the EU is founded. For example, as explained by the Court in the ***Conditionality judgments***, there is a link between solidarity, mutual trust and the rule of law in implementing the EU budget. First, the EU budget is 'one of the principal instruments for giving practical effect to [solidarity]'. Second, 'the implementation of [solidarity], through the Union budget, is based on mutual trust between the Member States in the responsible use of the common resources included in that budget'. Third and last, 'mutual trust is itself based… on the commitment of each Member State to comply with its obligations under EU law and to continue to comply… with the values contained in Article 2 TEU, which include the value of [respect for] the rule of law'.[22]

This brings me to the value of respect for the rule of law which has been centre-stage in the last five years, because certain Member States have passed reforms that affect the organisation of justice in ways that are at odds with the principle of judicial independence. Where 'rule of law backsliding' takes place, national courts are no longer insulated from pressure exercised by the executive and/or the legislature. To the dismay of many, the system of checks and balances established by those Member States has therefore been upset by those reforms.

Again, the Court of Justice has made crystal clear that the Member States may not rely on national identity in order to disregard that founding value. In the ***Conditionality judgments***, it held – and I quote – that '[whilst the Member States] have separate national identities, inherent in their fundamental structures, political and constitutional, which the European Union respects, [they] adhere to a concept of 'the rule of law' which they share, as a value common to their own constitutional traditions, and which they have undertaken to respect at all times'.[23] Stated differently, national identity, as enshrined in Article 4(2) TEU, may not be relied upon in order to call into question the common values on which the EU is founded and, in particular, respect for the rule of law.

In some quarters, the case law of the Court of Justice on the rule of law has been criticised as going too far in imposing limits on the way in which the Member States may organise their judiciaries. I respectfully disagree with those criticisms. The value of respect for the rule of law is of paramount importance, since it is the bedrock on which the EU judicial architecture rests. Structural considerations therefore underpin the case law of the Court of Justice on judicial independence. First, *without judicial independence*, individuals are deprived of effective judicial protection.[24] EU rights become an empty promise where judges may give in to external pressure. Second, *without judicial independence*, the uniform interpretation and application of EU law is called into question, since only independent judges have access to the preliminary reference mechanism. As a matter of fact, last year, the Court ruled, for the first time, that a chamber of a court, namely the Chamber of Extraordinary Control and Public Affairs of the Polish Supreme Court, was not independent and as a result,

[22] Judgments of 16 February 2022, *Hungary v Parliament and Council*, C-156/21, EU:C:2022:97, para. 129, and of 16 February 2022, *Poland v Parliament and Council*, C-157/21, EU:C:2022:98, para. 147.
[23] Judgments of 16 February 2022, *Hungary v Parliament and Council*, C-156/21, EU:C:2022:97, para. 234, and of 16 February 2022, *Poland v Parliament and Council*, C-157/21, EU:C:2022:98, para. 266.
[24] Judgment of 27 February 2018, *Associação Sindical dos Juízes Portugueses*, C-64/16, EU:C:2018:117.

could not engage in a dialogue with the Court of Justice.[25] The preliminary reference made by that chamber was therefore declared inadmissible. Third and last, *without judicial independence*, the free movement of judicial decisions comes to a halt, as national courts can only trust each other if they rule without fear or favour. In my view, the line of case law on the rule of law is not the result of judicial activism, but of what I call 'judicial existentialism'. Without independent national courts, the EU system of judicial protection could not survive and would simply collapse. EU rights would be worth less than the paper on which they are written and judges paper tigers; the uniform interpretation and application of EU law would be reduced to a pipe dream, and the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice would face fragmentation.

It should also be stressed that EU values, in general, and respect for the rule of law, in particular, leave room for national diversity. As the Court of Justice has consistently held, the EU does not impose a 'particular constitutional model' on the Member States.[26] They are free to choose their own system of checks and balances in accordance with their culture, history and traditions, provided that those choices comply with EU values. As I have written extrajudicially,[27] those values are limited to providing a framework of reference within which the Member States make their own choices.

In that regard, it is worth noting that in ***Repubblika***,[28] a case arising from a reference made by the First Hall of the Maltese Civil Court sitting as a Constitutional Court, the Court of Justice put forward two constitutional principles that seek to guarantee the proper functioning of that framework of reference, i.e. the principle of constitutional alignment and the principle of non-regression in value protection.

First, a candidate State for EU membership must align its own constitution and national identity with the values on which the EU is founded as a *condicio sine qua non* for accession. The 'Copenhagen Criteria' require, *inter alia*, strict adherence to that alignment. The decision to align its own constitutional arrangements with EU values is a sovereign choice of a candidate State for EU membership.[29] However, if a candidate State fails to do so, Article 49 TEU bars it from becoming a member of the EU.[30]

The principle of constitutional alignment means, in particular, that a Member State may not invoke its national identity in order not to comply with Article 2 TEU and the Treaty

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[25] Judgment of 21 December 2023, *Krajowa Rada Sądownictwa (Continued holding of a judicial office)*, C-718/21, EU:C:2023:1015

[26] Judgments of 21 December 2021, *Euro Box Promotion and Others*, C-357/19, C-379/19, C-547/19, C-811/19 and C-840/19, EU:C:2021:1034, para. 229 and the case-law cited, and of 22 February 2022, RS (Effect of the decisions of a constitutional court), C-430/21, EU:C:2022:99, para. 43.

[27] K. Lenaerts, 'On Checks and Balances: the Rule of Law Within the EU' (2023) 29 *Columbia Journal of European Law* 25, and 'On values and structures: The rule of law and the Court of Justice of the European Union' in A. Södersten and E. Hercock (eds), *The Rule of Law in the EU: Crisis and Solutions* (Stockholm, Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, 2023) 12.

[28] Judgment of 20 April 2021, *Repubblika*, C-896/19, EU:C:2021:311. See, also, for example, judgment of 5 June 2023, *Commission v Poland (Independence and private life of judges)*, C-204/21, EU:C:2023:442, para. 64.

[29] The same applies where a Member State decides to withdraw from the EU. See judgment of 10 December 2018, *Wightman and Others*, C-621/18, EU:C:2018:999, para. 50.

[30] That provision states that '[a]ny European State *which respects the values referred to in Article 2* and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union.' (Emphasis added). Judgment of 20 April 2021, *Repubblika*, C-896/19, EU:C:2021:311, para. 61.

provisions which give concrete expression to the values on which the EU is founded.[31] Acquiring the status of a Member State is, therefore, a 'constitutional moment' for the State concerned since, at that very moment, the legal order of the new Member State is deemed by the 'Masters of the Treaties' to uphold the values on which the EU is founded.

Second, after accession, the Member State in question commits itself to respecting those values for as long as it remains a member of the EU. That ongoing commitment means that there is 'no turning back the clock' when it comes to respecting the values contained in Article 2 TEU. Accession is the starting point in value protection, not the finish line. A Member State can always improve its level of value protection. However, EU law precludes a Member State from drifting towards an authoritarian regime or from falling into democratic backsliding. 'Compliance with those values', the Court of Justice has held, 'cannot be reduced to an obligation which a candidate State must meet in order to accede to the [EU] and which it may disregard after its accession'.[32] The Member States must respect those values 'at all times'.[33]

Moreover, that framework of reference, grounded in the values contained in Article 2 TEU, serves to protect the autonomy of the EU legal order, whilst contributing to defining the identity of the EU as a common legal order.[34]

Very briefly, allow me to say a few words about the identity of the EU. In the ***Conditionality Judgments***, the Court of Justice established a conceptual link between those values and the identity of the EU as a common legal order. That link serves to cultivate a sense of belonging to a community of values where traditional elements forming part of national identity, such as language, history and tradition, are not relevant as such. The EU endorses a new type of identity that operates outside the paradigm of the nation-State. The identity of the EU brings all Europeans together, since we can all identify with the values contained in Article 2 TEU, regardless of our national identity. We, Europeans, are diverse in that we speak different languages, pray to different gods, dismiss the existence of any god at all, have different understandings of family life and yet, we are united because we share and cherish those founding values. As a community of values, the EU is truly 'united in diversity'.

This shows that the EU is, first and foremost, a 'Union of values'. Those values inspired the authors of the Treaty of Rome to create 'an ever-closer union among the peoples of Europe'[35] and gave hope and courage to the generation of Europeans who dreamt of escaping the clutches of tyranny. Allow me to read a passage from the famous speech written by Václav Havel when he addressed the Council of Europe's Assembly in 1990, soon after the Velvet Revolution. When referring to his life under communism, he said 'We dreamt, whether in or out of prison, of a Europe without barbed wire, high walls, artificially divided nations and gigantic stockpiles of weapons, of a Europe free of "blocs", of a European policy

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[31] Judgment of 5 June 2023, *Commission v Poland (Independence and private life of judges)*, C-204/21, EU:C:2023:442, para. 72. The same holds true for the provisions of the Charter giving concrete expression to the values on which the EU is founded. See, in this regard, judgment of 5 June 2018, *Coman and Others*, C-673/16, EU:C:2018:385, paras 42 to 51, and judgment of 14 December 2021, *Stolichna obshtina, rayon 'Pancharevo'*, C-490/20, EU:C:2021:1008, paras 53 to 65.

[32] Judgments of 16 February 2022, *Hungary v Parliament and Council*, C-156/21, EU:C:2022:97, para. 126, and of 16 February 2022, *Poland v Parliament and Council*, C-157/21, EU:C:2022:98, para. 144.

[33] Judgments of 16 February 2022, *Hungary v Parliament and Council*, C-156/21, EU:C:2022:97, para. 234, and of 16 February 2022, *Poland v Parliament and Council*, C-157/21, EU:C:2022:98, para. 266.

[34] See, in that regard, K. Lenaerts and J.A. Gutiérrez-Fons, 'Epilogue. High Hopes: Autonomy and the Identity of the EU' (2023) 8 *European Papers* 1495.

[35] Preamble to the Treaty on European Union.

based on respect for [human rights], of politics unsubordinated to transient and particular interests. Yes, the Europe of our dreams was a friendly community of independent nations and democratic states'.[36]

Dear friends, dear judges, one should never underestimate the power of dreaming. If there is one thing that these last twenty years have shown, it is that Havel's dream has become a living truth. We must continue to fight for a Europe based on democracy, freedom and justice for all. We owe it not only to the Europeans who led the way in reuniting the continent but also to future generations. It is our duty to them to uphold and preserve those fundamental European values.

Thank you very much.

[36] V. Havel, 'The Power of Dreaming', Speech to the Council of Europe Assembly, Strasbourg, 10 May 1990.