

## **Einführung von Prof. Dr. Ingolf Pernice zur Humboldt-Rede zu Europa von Bertie Ahern, Premierminister Irlands am 2. Juni 2005**

Dear Prime Minister,  
dear guests from Dublin  
dear ambassador O’Huiginn,  
Excellencies,  
Liebe Kommilitonen,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to welcome you at Humboldt-University.

Europe is not doing well, at this moment after two negative referendums – in two important founding Member States of the Union.

On the other hand: This morning, Latvia ratified the European constitution with an overwhelming majority. This brings the number of ratifications to ten.

So, in many respects, this is a good day to speak about the future of Europe.

We are pleased that Bertie Ahern is here today to share his views with us on „Europe – our Common Future“.

Let me express our deep gratitude to you, Taoiseach, that in times where your political advice will be sought all over Europe, you spend your precious time with the guests and students of our University.

At this moment of great concern for the EU-Constitution many questions arise. They range from the analysis of the negative votes to the political steps to be taken to deal with them.

What could be such steps?

We all hope that the Constitution will survive. At least most of us hope so. Some say that governments should start implementing some of the new mechanisms of the Constitution soon.

This may be a dangerous idea. The constitution is a carefully crafted compromise of different institutional and national interests. Countries have made compromises, as have governments and parliaments. This Constitution is a package. *(It is this package that ten Member States, including Germany have ratified).*

Nothing would be worse than the de-construction of the Constitution before November 2006. We will probably have to wait until then to see clearer.

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I am particularly happy that it is you we can listen and ask our questions to, and not any other head of State or Government. Let me explain:

Ladies and Gentlemen: Who is Bertie Ahern?

To be short, born in 1951, Bertie Ahern is one of the most popular and successful political leaders in Europe, he is a great football-fan, and he is the father of a young, but already famous author, Cecilia Ahern.

As Prime Minister of Ireland, Bertie Ahern was the President of the European Council at a time when the Constitution for Europe had its first crisis: after the failure of the 2003 Brussels summit. He was the man who – through his competence and energy, his diplomacy and his commitment for Europe – has achieved what many already thought lost:

He brought 25 Governments to agree on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, on the 18 of June 2004. It was a most original and intelligent strategy of negotiation that has permitted this success:

- First, searching for and finding agreement on many of the open issues during tiering visits around Europe,
- then, selecting only a few „hot“ issues needing discussion at the final round of debate among the heads of State and government,
- while compromises on other points considered less „hot“ but which were not of minor importance were proposed to be agreed without discussion.

This allowed the European Council to find solutions for the big issues and to agree, finally, on the complete text.

Congratulations! And thank you again for this achievement for Europe.

But people could have known that that Bertie Ahern has been a most successful negotiator throughout his political carrier, a career that –he started 14 years old. Let me just mention two important examples:

- In the late 80ies Irelands economy started rapid development, causing deep social tensions. Bertie Ahern was the Minister of Labour then. He achieved, together with his Prime Minister Haughey a „national economic agreement“

with the trade unions, ensuring social peace while the economy could continue to grow.

- After having been elected 1997 the youngest Prime Minister in the history of the Irish State, the biggest achievement was his role in the Northern Ireland Peace Process: History was made at Easter 1998 with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, which finally brought peace to Northern Ireland.

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Bertie Ahern was re-elected Prime Minister in 2002. He hopes to achieve a historic third general election victory in 2007: We are sure that you will win. We wish you luck !

But we also hope that you — will find adequate solutions for a way out of this second crisis of the Constitution for Europe, in collaboration with your colleagues and, in particular, with Jean Claude Juncker, the now acting President of the European Council.

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Europe needs intellectual and political leadership in these difficult times, you are one of the few to take it.

Before meeting Chancellor Schröder and probably talking with him about the same issue, please let us have your views, now, on „Europe - our common future“.

Thank you very much, Prime Minister, for joining us today.

You have the floor