

Jean-Claude Trichet: State celebrations for the introduction of the euro in Slovakia

Statement by Mr Jean-Claude Trichet, President of the European Central Bank, at the State celebrations for the introduction of the euro in Slovakia, Bratislava, 8 January 2009.

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Dear President, Prime Ministers, Excellencies,
Dear Governors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The introduction of a new currency is an historic moment for a country, and the introduction of the euro in a Member State through the Treaty-based convergence process is an historic moment for Europe. Robert Schuman stated in his founding declaration that Europe will be made through concrete achievements which create tangible solidarity among its people. European monetary union is a concrete achievement, and the euro is a tangible sign of solidarity among its people. The euro is also a tangible sign of increasing economic integration in Europe, which is to the benefit of stability and prosperity for its citizens. Today, with Slovakia's adoption of the euro, we therefore have every reason to celebrate.

Slovakia's economic achievements on the way towards euro adoption

Slovakia has made remarkable progress in both nominal and real convergence. This has been reflected in a decline in inflation and a significant economic growth record. Slovakia's performance is based on the firm foundations of a bold economic reform programme implemented earlier this decade.

Cooperation between the ECB and Národná banka Slovenska

On the side of central banks, this historic moment has been prepared through a very close cooperation over the last couple of years between the European Central Bank and Národná banka Slovenska under the leadership of Governor Šramko. This cooperation has laid the groundwork for the smooth and successful introduction of the euro in Slovakia.

The sustainability of convergence

The introduction of the euro in Slovakia will further enhance the benefits of the Single Market. The euro removes exchange rate uncertainty between Slovakia and many of its most important trading partners, integrates the country into one of the world's largest economies and helps to shield it from some of the effects of the international financial turbulence.

It is also important to stress that the introduction of the euro must not give rise to complacency. In order to ensure that convergence is sustainable and that the Slovak people can reap the full benefits of euro adoption, the Slovak public authorities will need to pursue ambitious economic policies on all fronts. A rigorous and credible implementation of fiscal policy in line with the commitments of the Stability and Growth Pact is particularly important. Other policy measures would need to focus on Slovakia's labour market to improve its functioning and on strengthening further the business environment in order to enhance productivity growth. With such policies, Slovakia should be well positioned for a long term continued successful economic performance. Ladies and gentlemen, let me congratulate you on all the achievements made on the way towards the introduction of the euro in your country, and extend my warmest welcome to Národná banka Slovenska as the new member of the Eurosystem family. Welcome Slovakia!