

Speech of Jesse Scott at the Academic Session of the European University Institute in Florence, November 7, 2001

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[Editors' Note: Jesse Scott presented these remarks as part of the Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE in the Badia Fiesolana, Fiesole, Italy, on 7 November 2001. The Editors wish to express their gratitude towards Jesse for allowing us to publish her speech]

Dear Guests, Dear Institute Members,

[1] I'm here to add a few words to the end of this 25th anniversary ceremony on behalf of or from the perspective of the PhD and LLM researchers whose work in Florence is, indeed, the primary purpose of the Institute. I'll be brief since very soon we will all move to the party where I hope Commissioners will meet and talk with many researchers.

[2] So, what can I add to the thoughts of the other speakers? First, I must echo the praise that they have given the Institute, and the thanks that they offer to all who have been crucial to the Institute's past, present and future. That their enthusiasm is justified and shared by the researchers here can only be confirmed by the fact that every year so many researchers choose to move to Florence in order to study at the Institute. - Earlier today one researcher was saying to me how much she was looking forward to meeting one of the Commissioners because, she explained, "he works on 'my' subject": accidental as this upside-down formulation was, it says much for the confidence of the Institute at 25, a confidence which we hope that the Commission, at 50, takes in good humour.

[3] Second, comes a warm welcome to the Commissioners from the researchers. For the Institute's researchers the visit of the Commissioners today is important and especially welcome because it has not just taken the Institute as a scenic backdrop to a political occasion. For us it is valuable and right that this visit involves engagement with the work of the Institute. We very much encourage that visitors here follow and build upon this example and come not only to speak but also to listen to our questions and discuss with us. At the Institute researchers consider that we have not only a mass of expertise but perhaps also a special affinity with the institutions of European integration. Were the Commissioners to be able to spend longer in Florence they might find themselves feeling surprisingly at home: while at one level the Institute is an enormous graduate programme, not fundamentally different from any other university, yet, at another, it is extraordinary - like the Commission, the Institute is multilingual, it has a supranational outlook but in many things operates within a complex inter-governmental system, it has its own 'unique' and 'memorable' experience of opaque multicultural bureaucracy, it faces a constant challenge in explaining to the outside world what it is and what it does. The Commission has 50 years experience of the daily institutional practice of integration, but additionally the Institute has 25 years worth in its own cultural field. At the same time, the Institute stands apart from the EU institutions and is able to see them from a distance. Here in Florence the combination of daily experiential expertise in integration with the professional academic expertise of independent research work and with a self-consciously trans-European multicultural vocation produces a unique, powerful, mix.

[4] Third, I must admit that the researchers have a somewhat incomplete perspective upon the Institute's 25 years: simply, I and many current researchers had barely begun our nursery education when the Institute opened, some current researchers were not yet even born. On the one hand, this means that from our perspective the Institute is, just as in 1976 it planned to become, an established part of the international academic landscape: we tend to take the existence of a European university for granted. On the other hand, our perspective also means that we are acutely conscious that the Institute is nonetheless - like us - very young, and that it - like us (we hope) - is only at the beginning of a very promising, long career. Naturally, therefore, we tend to look to the future of the Institute rather than its past. Naturally, therefore, we think of the Institute's youth in comparison to other top academic institutions as a source of opportunity: we expect the Institute to be in the vanguard of new developments, to be as flexible and academically up-to-date as ourselves. Ruefully, therefore, we recognise that the Institute's youth means that it - like us - has only limited material resources which are frequently need of increase.

[5] Finally, drawing together the messages of our confidence as researchers here, of our sense of affinity with the European institutions, and of our instinct to look to the future - to the next 25 years - the Institute's researchers are particularly interested in future European enlargement, in the accession of the applicant countries to the EU to the Institute. Here again we share a common experience with the EU and the Commission, indeed, since Polish and Hungarian students and small numbers of others from both the CEEC and the Mediterranean area already work at the Institute arguably we are ahead of the EU in this crucial next phase of European development. Researchers here are eager that the Institute should be in the forefront of EU enlargement, that cultural integration should proceed

alongside political and economic integration.

[6] We hope that over the next 25 years the Institute will remain the place of choice for young researchers, the institution of our future students choice. Okay, I think the hard part of today for all is over, I can assure the Commissioners that the students here throw wonderful parties. Thank you - and Happy Birthday.