

**Dear Prime Minister,  
Dear Mr CUK,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a particular pleasure for me to welcome you to our FEACO Conference 2003 under the motto "Local Consultancy Meets Global Players" here in Ljubljana, which also happens to be my mother's birthplace. In particular, I wish to thank our host, the Slovenian member association, for the professional preparation of this conference. I am convinced that everybody present will join me in my heartfelt thanks to the Slovenian association.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

At the beginning of my short speech I will briefly outline the major aims and latest activities of our European umbrella organisation for management consulting associations, FEACO. But first I would like to spend a thought on why we chose to come to the city of Ljubljana from far away places from around the world. We have chosen to do so because we are all united by the wish to exchange views and information about our consulting markets that are getting closer and closer in this 'globalized' world, and this conference is the perfect opportunity to do so.

During the last years FEACO, the European Federation of Management Consulting Associations, has become the unified voice of our profession in Europe. It promotes the interests of Management Consultancy at the different European and international organisations by maintaining close contacts with European institutions, such as the European Commission, and other pan-European and international organisations, such as the World Bank. In this way, FEACO defends and raises awareness for professional interests of management consultants.

We have also recognised that only if national associations get closer will it be possible to set and reach common objectives. For this reason joint meetings of the FEACO Executive Committee and the national associations have been organised for some time now – recently with our Austrian and our French colleagues. These meetings are not only meant to make our business more widely known, that means beyond our national frontiers, but also to support the national associations in their manifold tasks and to lend an ear to their preoccupations, as well as giving them a direct insight and input into the workings of FEACO. This year therefore for the first time, the annual General Assembly will not take place in Brussels but in Zürich.

FEACO also aims to increase the direct benefit of active co-operation with other sector-related associations. Here I would like to mention the importance of our contacts with ICMCI, the international organisation for quality assurance in consultancy, with EFCA, the European umbrella organisation of engineering consultants and, last but not least, with Zen-Noh-Ren, the All Japan Federation of Management Organisations, with whom we maintain close contacts.

Finally I would like to talk about one particular task we have set ourselves this year: the re-drafting and further development of our professional standards, which uniformly apply in all FEACO Member countries. I believe that the fulfilment of this task will take up a great deal of our time and energy in the coming months.

### **Dear participants**

At present the consultancy industry is having rather a difficult time. In a first brief assessment of the annual FEACO Survey on the European Consultancy Market, which will probably be published in July of this year, the European management consultants expect that there will no

major impulses whatsoever for the development of our sector in the current year. The year 2002 has led to reductions in turnover of up to five per cent in most of the large consultancy markets, such as Germany, Great Britain, France or Italy.

Whilst there has been a clear increase in demand for consultancy services in relation to rationalisation and outsourcing projects or to clients' cost reduction programmes, companies in the industrial and commercial sector postponed any innovative projects requiring new investments. The declining market has particularly affected the IT consultants.

I think it is realistic to say that the European consultancy businesses can be expected to pick up again by 2004 at the earliest, not least due to EU enlargement. Numerous previously state-owned companies will then have to be converted into private, profitable companies. Here the expertise of business consultants will be required. But I do not wish to anticipate Gil Gidron's speech in which he will give you a comprehensive report about the market situation.

### **Ladies and gentlemen,**

Before concluding my brief welcome address I would like to present a thought to you which preoccupies me a great deal at the moment. I am very concerned about the conflicts of opinion among several EU member states which culminated in connection with the Iraq war. The many disagreements in terms of statements and actions are frightening and make it clear that the economic and political unification process in the EU has to be intensified.

In the Europe of the future we need a common "European awareness" which allows us to speak with one voice. A harmonisation of citizens' rights and taxes in Europe would be an essential element in this process. Many of us who live in EU member states but are not

nationals of these states do not enjoy full citizen rights and are often discriminated because e.g. there is no double taxation agreement in place. This situation is unacceptable in a single Europe with a single currency.

From my point of view it is therefore inevitable that the upcoming European constitution should provide for a univocal and complete European citizenship. I am convinced that a much closer political unification will be brought about this way, comparable to the effect that the introduction of the Euro has had so far. Such a European citizenship should also give entitlement to a common European Union passport. Here too FEACO will continue to be active, in order to make a contribution to the future.

Finally I would like to thank the organisers of the FEACO conference 2003 once again and all those who contributed to its success by their commitment and energy. And I am sure you don't mind if I look a bit ahead to the year 2004 when I say that I am already looking forward to holding our FEACO conference in Greece, hosted by our Greek member organisation SESMA.

I wish you all an interesting conference and stimulating discussions.

Thank you very much for your attention.