

Globalization European Style: Big Hopes of a Small Country

Victor MAKAROV

Research Director, the Baltic Forum, Latvia

What a nation, especially a small one, stands to lose from globalization is on everyone's mind. And that to such a degree that the potential benefits of living in a globalized world tend to drown in the swamp of paralyzing fear. Instead of fear, however, a small country needs a strategy. Instead of trying to fend off globalization, the states should embrace it as an opportunity. For two reasons, no other part of the world has a better chance to do so than the European Union. First, the EU itself has been, for its members, a exercise in managed and benign globalization on a regional scale. The EU countries have already undergone the shift from sovereign nationhood to a more complex, multilevel governance structure. Second, the EU is the perfect company for going global. It has the values and the material means necessary to transform its societies, enabling them to act confidently in a larger world. The EU can offer a better, a more humane vision of globalization. The EU and its member states have so far failed dismally to implement this vision. Yet, for a small society like Latvia, globalizing 'European style' remains the best hope there is. This vision can be boiled down to a simple recipe: Instead of abolishing the nation state, redefine it creatively. way. Create an open market economy, but also an effective system of government able to maintain and increase the main productive resources of the 21st century: healthy and educated people, social trust and a well-functioning democratic society. Support a feeling of national and cultural belonging among your citizens, but redefine your national identity in terms of cultural variety rather than uniformity. Promote responsible citizenship and inculcate democratic values, but leave out the exclusionist and xenophobic discourse. Remember that in the present day world the states do not demand loyalty from its citizens; they compete for it. The best citizens Latvia can have are those who also feel they are citizens of Europe and citizens of the world.