

In the last 70 years we have achieved what Schuman dreamed about: peace and cooperation. And we have gone even further. The Union has gone from the coal and steel community, through customs union, monetary union to all-encompassing integrated organization. It has expanded from 6 to 27 member states and counting. We have built the world's most integrated, supranational structure that helps make the life of its 446 million citizens easier. The European continent is now safer than it has ever been before which allows us to think beyond. The magnitude of the EU has given us the luxury to focus on the values of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, education and cultural development as well as prosperity for all. We have seen that Europe is stronger when it works together. To sustain and further develop our project and to overcome any issues we are facing, we must continue cooperating.

Yet, today we see a number of challenges that threaten our project of European cooperation, both from the outside and from within. An accumulation of external factors put the EU under immense stress: Migration, climate change, terrorism, armed conflicts to name a few.

To withstand these pressures, we must stand together and united. A response of resilience requires a cohesive EU. However, in the past years we have met our own limitations of cooperation. Finding a common position among 27 member states sometimes is a difficult task. The member states vary greatly in every aspect, as do their priorities, and their sensitivity to the pressures mentioned above. But in fact, we share common values that are the foundation of our successful Union: Peace, Democracy, Freedom, Human Rights, Rule of Law. Despite these values, we struggle to reach cohesion in many policy areas. The result is a rise of populist movements, isolationism, a return of extreme nationalism, xenophobia and anti-EU resentment.

It is time for the EU to look into its future and decide in which direction it wants to go. Do we want to continue on our current path, or are we brave enough to develop our Union further?

If we dare to be brave enough, we must address the shortcomings of our institutional structure. This requires radical reforms that strengthen the federal and supranational character of the EU: Strengthening and expanding the competences of the European Parliament, making it an equal partner in the EU decision making processes. By providing the European Parliament, the only directly elected body of the EU, with the initiative right, we give EU citizens more democratic

power. It also increases transparency and efficiency. European parliamentary elections must be unified through transnational lists. This ensures cohesive and transparent elections. Further, we must abolish the unanimity-rule within the Council of the EU in order to facilitate policy output. The proposal for the President of the Commission must be included in the transnational party programs.

We need to give the peoples of Europe a bigger say over the decisions made for them. A federal Europe is a strong and cohesive Europe and a federal Europe needs strong, transparent and democratic institutions. We hope that we will see these changes implemented in our lifetime and the EU will be on the right path.

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