

## **Schuman Declaration 2.0**

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Seventy years ago, our European founders brought forth a new idea to our continent. This newly-born union built on peace and prosperity secured a future for all subsequent generations.

Today, our European family is divided from east to west and from north to south. We face a crisis of solidarity. As the democracies of the east crumble before us, indifference has been our main response in the west. As refugees seek shelter, fear and isolation prevail over charity and human decency. In the face of an international health crisis, states would rather close their borders and hold on to what they have instead of meaningfully help one another. Our European family must overcome these divisions if it hopes to stand the test of time.

A contaminated moral environment has lingered and evolved in the east. The shadow of authoritarianism lurks and undermines democracies within our shared borders. Under the banner of patriotism, pillars of the state are being dismantled, inevitably leaving a dominant party with an all-powerful leader to decide the fate of their people. Where is the outrage of democrats throughout Europe? Where is our solidarity? The shackles of the past are being reforged under a new name. To the indifference of the West, the Iron Curtain has become the Iron Cage.

As the displaced seek refuge, they are met with closed doors. Countries guarding our Mediterranean borders are left to fend for themselves as they shelter beyond their capacity. Life-savers at sea are treated like criminals at home. Rather than tackle our problems together, we face them alone. De-facto solidarity has turned into de-facto self-interest.

From Rome to Amsterdam, when casualty rates from the COVID-19 were at their peak, solidarity was at its weakest. Help wasn't given with eagerness but reluctance. In the face of an extraordinary crisis, the same ordinary north vs south rhetoric persisted. Unless we defeat this virus together, the very fabric of our union will be under threat. It is time for Europe to become more European.

North and south, east and west, bridging solidarity is what we need. As Europe fails to overcome the problems of our time with cohesion and coherence, we seek a new, resilient answer. We seek to revitalize the European vision of strength through solidarity.

To foster our European community and conquer the rift between the corners of our continent, we must unite in one of our most basic freedoms - the right to vote. We call for the emancipation of all European citizens in all European elections on the basis of where each person lives rather than where they are from. Europeans are far more impacted by the policies of the countries where they live and work, rather than those of their countries of birth. It is time for their voices to be heard. We wish to expand our democracy by giving equal voting rights to all Europeans, thereby considering a wider European interest. Let us build on our spirit of solidarity, let us create a European electorate. That is the next step in the fusion of interests that our founders wished to realise.

Not only do we need a European electorate, but we also need European politicians. With the universal emancipation of all European citizens, greater diversity in those who vote will necessitate greater diversity of those they vote for. A new framework giving equal rights for all European citizens to run for any office throughout Europe is what we ask for. By doing so, we will bridge the divide between our communities, facilitate dialogue amongst them and build a shared future. From Lisbon to Helsinki, we will forge a new partnership not as nations with aligned interests, but as Europeans with a common goal.

At the center of the European project is the desire for everlasting peace. Some say that there is no need to continue our march towards an ever closer union. They would believe that peace has already been achieved for our time. To this we say: Europe disunited shall never be at peace. Only by strengthening the bonds between us can we ensure that war remains unthinkable and materially impossible. Solidarity is the bond we wish to reinforce in the interest of peace.

With resentment towards none; with conscientiousness for all, let us strive on to continue the work our founders started - let us strive towards it with political courage and faith in each other.