

## Schuman Declaration 2.0

The Schuman declaration was a crucial document that paved the way for the prosperity of our nations, prosperity that far exceeded the expectations our ancestors had envisioned at the time. From the humble beginnings of integration plans, the approach was "ambitious in terms of values and goals, practical when it comes to actions". The continent which gave birth to the Enlightenment, provided enormous contribution to cultural heritage, innovations as well as economic development of the humankind. Ultimately, it has got closer to the paramount idea of living according to its own values.

The Schuman Declaration advocated the creation of a new economic cooperation mechanism with a special focus on integrating the strategically important coal and steel industries under one authority. The increasing economic interdependence between the newly democratic Germany and victorious yet devastated France was aimed at preventing future wars. By creating de facto solidarity, resolving national ambitions by arms between these European nations should become unthinkable. Over the years, the number of nations resolving their problems in the framework of the European integration grew.

Despite the growing significance of the political powers being critical toward the European project, the de facto solidarity and the European sense of community succeeded. Nowadays, even many of those challenging the institutional framework of the Union embrace its values. Political forces interact and form their positions and platform in cooperation with their European partners in a similar manner as private companies take advantage of the free movement of goods and services.

At the same time, the existence of divisions within the EU cannot be denied. The EU consists of many different countries characterised, by different traditions, economic circumstances, religions, national and local memories, and historical experiences which form their outlook. The creation of a feeling of belonging to a single political community requires measures which address these issues. Such feeling is essential in achieving sustainable institutional and political development in Europe.

The strength of the EU lies in its values defined by the treaties and universal norms. The European Union must protect its people, but on the fundamental level, it cannot serve as a closed fortress for them, but rather as a shining lighthouse for others who seek its ideals. While the Ancient Romans held many unacceptable and brutal views, they can be a superior example for modern Europeans in some ways: no one is born better than another, no culture is perfect and without room for improvement. In the framework of its values, the EU must remain curious and open to adapting new solutions that work and further improve the quality of life of its citizens and society.

Europe is a combination of its citizens. Peaceful integration of European powers has always been furthered through sustainable, moderate steps. Sometimes, the best solutions may have been dismissed because of this principle, but in the long run, everyone was kept onboard. Alternative tracks of integration have always existed and must exist in the future, too.

The European Parliament gains its legitimacy through a democratic process, but this is often too indirect or an abstract connection with the people of the Union. To create more accountability and political competition, the EU must begin to elect the Chairman of the European Commission by a direct voting system with ideologically competing candidates. The current system of checks and balances of the democratic process should stay in place, but become more transparent through procedural improvement conveying a clear message that the destiny of the European people is intertwined with strong bonds. The details and strategies have to be debated.

To a considerable extent, solidarity through economic interdependence is already achieved. At this point, it is time to fulfill the promise of a common political space. It will enable the citizens to view the EU as a natural platform for political debate, rather than a bureaucratic institution sitting in an ivory tower. From Ceuta to Lapland, from the Black Sea to Bordeaux, the people are eager to enjoy the benefits the Union has to offer. They seek European belonging and identity. Standing for values and holding hands is a process, but the EU was able to overcome past hardships to reach this present. Not everyone is born European, but everyone can become European. That is the reason why not only Europe is for all, but also all for Europe.