

BUILDING THE FUTURE OF THE EU: OUR GENERATION'S DUTY

Manuel Valls | *Prime Minister of France*

This Tribune transposes the speech delivered by Manuel Valls during the [debate](#) with Jean-Claude Juncker at the Conservatoire national des arts et métiers in Paris on 7 October 2016, organised at the occasion of the [20th anniversary](#) of the creation of the Jacques Delors Institute, then under the name of “Notre Europe.” You may find the [video](#) of this speech on our YouTube channel and the [photos](#) of the event on our Flickr account

Mr President of the Commission, dear Jean-Claude, Mr President of the Delors Institute, thank you for inviting me dear Enrico, Mr. Minister, dear Harlem DESIR,

Allow me to salute the former ministers, commissioners, and prominent figures who are among us today, and who are each and every one connected to the personality and action of Jacques DELORS.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted and very proud to be with you at the CNAM, and thank Olivier FARON for welcoming us here to celebrate this anniversary and to pay tribute to one of the founding fathers of the new Europe, Jacques DELORS. He is, as such Mr President, dear Jean-Claude, your mentor as I have understood. Listening to you, it struck me that you are also one of his heirs: your vision of Europe is very similar to his, and you also share the same pragmatism, and in these difficult times especially, the taste for truth is essential.

1. What is the current situation in Europe?

The Commission over which you preside has displayed its competence and commitment, and I can attest to this as Prime Minister. Yet you yourself have called it

the “last-chance commission”, as, speaking plainly, the European project is in bad shape. Of course, Europe and its Union have always endured crises. However, such an accumulation of crises is unprecedented. It is the European project itself that is strained, its meaning. The European Union could fall apart.

First of all, of course, the terrorist threat, with the repeated attacks of radical Islamism.

The migration crisis, secondly, with the state collapse in Syria and Libya, chaos in the Near and Middle East - and you know, I was able to publically discuss the political choice of Germany. But we have at the front of our minds the images - and these are not just images, but frightful dramas in the Mediterranean. And we know that without a political or military solution in Libya, Syria, and Iraq, we will continue to live through these dramas in the months and years to come.

Thirdly, an economic crisis. Europe, with its long-standing promise of prosperity, is no longer synonymous with growth, at least in most states, but rather with unemployment, particularly among its young people, of course including but not only in France.



Then came Brexit; it says something about the immense crisis of confidence that people are experiencing with regard to Europe, after other referenda in recent years, in France, in Greece, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Hungary in one way or another.

Naturally, Europe has taken action and we must always remember that we are still going in the right direction. But together - and I would like to respond to the injunction of Enrico LETTA - governments, Commission and Parliament, we must act even more quickly and more strongly, because there is urgency. Europeans must be able to see and understand what Europe does - they no longer understand it - and what Europe is, its own identity. This is what we must uphold much more than we are currently doing.

2. A substantial rethink of the project and tackling the real issues head-on

2.1. What does it mean to be European?

To be European above all means having a certain idea of humanity - I am not saying this because we need an exercise in style because this seems fundamental to me, especially in light of the earth-shattering changes happening in the world.

We share the same concept of human and citizen rights, because the European construction is the fruit of the dramas and horrors of the 20th century. This conception has founded a priori from east to west, our political organisations: it gives power to the sovereign population through the voices of their elected representatives; it defends freedom and rejects arbitrary ways.

We refuse inequality and discrimination. I am thinking of gender equality, a value for which Europe has worked hard to develop our old Nations - and these are struggles which, for some of us, are still on the road ahead. I would add that for me, being European means refusing, in the name of freedom, that women be held prisoner by a male domination that wishes to deny them their individuality by hiding them behind a full-length veil or excluding them from public areas.

But Europe is also the abolition of the death penalty!
But Europe is also the right to an abortion!
But Europe is also the independence of the judiciary!
But Europe is also the independence of the media!

But Europe is also this right to asylum, which is a universal right and a conventional right that must be respected and maintained!

Let us acknowledge together that these rights and freedoms are currently called into question in some of the European Union's Member-States, not only by the rise of populism but also by governments and by majorities. This requires from us - as you are doing - a great deal of vigilance and action.

Being European is also a way of life.

We have an attachment to culture that brings us together, allows us to be open to others, that should not be restricted to an elite. As Fernand BRAUDEL said, culture is the common language of Europe. We share - one would say that it is easy to remember and it nevertheless seems essential to me - these giants of literature, and the list is impressive: Cervantes, Goethe, Dante and Molière... When they wrote, they spoke of us, Europeans. We have genius painters: Velazquez, Rembrandt, or Michelangelo... when they painted, they told our story. And there are of course virtuosos: Mozart, Verdi, Chopin, Ravel... when they composed, they made hearts beat across the continent.

But we could also take the reality of today's culture, from these great thinkers and writers, from Habermas to Le Clézio, or the incredible painter that is Miguel Barceló. I could also evoke the current reality of digital culture or urban art and a Europe diversified by a mix of peoples and cultures.

Being European is having the conviction that an intellectual work will always be more than a commercial commodity. This is why Europe must strive to protect its cultural and creative industries - its cinema, music and artists - , which entails the necessary protection of copyrights, particularly at the time of the digital revolution, and because large enterprises, often American ones, want to impose their vision of culture on the world.

Our way of life is also our social model. I do not overlook the differences between our countries, but we all identify with values of social justice and solidarity. Christian democrats, social Christians and social democrats have defended and continue to defend the same ideas together: yes to a market economy, to competition, but not at any cost, not to the detriment of the most vulnerable. Europe cannot mean "every man for himself", giving up in the face of ultra-liberalist offensives.

Europe is an area governed by regulations, and this has been forgotten for several years, notably after the presidencies of Delors and Prodi and you have it in your heart to keep this regulatory will alive. And I continue to believe, because I am a social democrat and a social reformist, that social democracy – despite the deep, deep crisis it is going through, for not having been able to bring the right answer to the soviet block collapsing or to economic globalisation - has its solutions, now more than ever. This, on the condition also that we know how to reinvent ourselves, and redefine our vision of social compromise, still founded on social dialogue - which you have recalled -, to rethink the funding of the welfare state and of social protection, and above all to give new meaning to politics and to Europe.

Finally, our way of life is also our relation to the environment. This is why we are combatting climate change collectively. And the historic Paris Agreement, now nearly one year old, now ratified by the Union, a historic step, would not have been possible - and this is why we need to speak about what works - without Europe's commitment, its diplomacy, the Commission and without you yourself, dear Jean-Claude JUNCKER, over these last days.

Being European means having a responsibility with regard to the world.

Because Europe is the cradle of what is universal. It embodies values that are promoted across the globe, which speak to people's hearts on all continents. And this is why Europe is expected to take action, and at times why its silence and inaction are judged so harshly.

European identity is therefore a set of values, a culture and a civilisation, and I say this especially to the youth. I always keep this identity in mind, and I am proud, when I see the European flag flying next to the French flag, the flag of my country. Our respective flags, those of Europeans, were once waved against each other, and now they all come under a single banner! There is therefore room for patriotism in each of our countries, and for a European commitment, a European patriotism. The two go hand-in-hand.

Let's be clear on this: upholding a European identity means accepting the existence of external borders. Often, this subject has been taboo... It means saying that Europe starts and ends somewhere. Not to exclude

or reject, but to demarcate and define this space, this identity, this civilisation, this economic space, and this cultural space. Without an exterior, we will fail to find an interior!

And I say it frankly: the Union is not meant for indefinite enlargement!

Other States, particularly in the Balkans, will of course be able to join the EU at the right time, but we also have to be able to say no. I am truly convinced of this.

We are all, of course, thinking about Turkey. It is a sensitive, complex subject I admit, and one that cannot be resolved quickly, especially on the trestles of electoral campaigning. We must however, at one time or another, stop the hypocrisy. Turkey is a major partner, an essential player in our collective security. We see this with the refugee crisis. This country is a member of NATO. Yet we need to get to the bottom of this debate. Not because it is a Muslim country. Islam - modern Islam, freed of the Salafist poison - has a rightful place in Europe, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Islam can even be considered part of us, part of our European identity, of our history and our roots, like other monotheistic religions. But because we need to know where Europe starts and ends, we must be clear, because we need to know which geographical and political destiny countries are willing to share. In any case, we will have to foster strategic partnerships with Turkey, with Russia clearly, the Near East, Egypt and the Maghreb - I will come back to this

2.2. Which political project for Europe?

I have started with this vision of Europe - you will tell me that it is very French! - because without meaning, without this political vision, we will not be able to convince.

My generation saw Europe build itself, and I know that Europe has brought my own country, Spain, the southern countries, Spain, Portugal, Greece -, and to the countries that wanted to leave the communist bloc because they thought, rightly so, that the European Union would bring them economic and social progress.

But we know that – in relation to the generations who live only with economic crisis and the chaos of the world - if we are not capable of giving meaning to Europe, they will turn away from it. Even democracy is not a given: today some believe that, beyond



democracy, there are other kinds of authoritarian political regimes that can be effective and protect. Therefore the debate is more open than ever.

In this Europe, its identity and borders must be sovereign, under a “federation of nation states.” Jacques DELORS found the appropriate wording for this, and as a figure with a deep understanding of Europe and history, he showed the way.

So let us go back to the origins of his message: Europe must not become a federal state - you have just said it, dear Jean-Claude - even though we have all read the speech of Victor Hugo, the “United States of Europe”; no, no... And at the same time, it is more than an international organisation, as the States have freely decided to exercise vast areas of their prerogatives together, starting with their currency - which we must defend -: the Euro.

I believe in Nations. They are not melancholic or a vestige of the past; they are a landmark in this fast-paced world. And look at the great Nations which are emerging or returning to global prominence... It is a curious lesson of history to see Russia, Turkey, and Iran re-emerge and weigh themselves against a Europe that is having trouble affirming its ambitions; and because the United States of America renounce their own ambitions, to see, in the Levant, things happening in such a way that we are returning to what existed before the First World War. History is here, it is back, with its tragic side too.

And without strong Nations, the European project becomes vulnerable. Yet without a powerful Union, our Nations are weakened. Europe provides this additional sovereignty that allows our Nations to enjoy greater weighting. This is where the great trickery of populism comes in, populism that is rampant everywhere. They claim that we must withdraw from the world and

barricade ourselves. This is such nonsense, and we know it! Opting for isolation and nationalism is tantamount to choosing ruin and decline! In France, the National Front, the far right proposes not only leaving the Euro, but also an exit from the European Union. That would ruin our country, our economy, and the “little man” and the poorer classes that they claim to defend. We must fight with conviction first and foremost, against those who promise, through “turning over the table” as the other said, a bright and glorious future, but who, the day after, show themselves for what they really are and disappear!

3. The time of innocence is over. Europe must take charge.

No, it is up to us, as determined Europeans, to make improvements. This is in effect, Enrico, a matter of utmost urgency.

We must show that Europe understands and responds to people’s concerns. And to do so, Europe must take charge and understand that the time of innocence is over. Because history is here.

3.1. Security and defence

First of all, and I will go through this quickly, in terms of security and defence. We must have a sovereign Europe that protects.

Europeans are demanding a Europe which protects them, which guarantees their internal security but also, and this is a new development, which acts beyond its external borders, as we are living in a territorial continuum of threats, between outside threats and internal threats.

Throughout this year and in Bratislava, in particular through the commitment of the French President

François HOLLANDE and the German Chancellor Angela MERKEL, as well as the Commission, important decisions were made in terms of internal security - I am thinking of the PNR or the directive on arms, as you have mentioned. Yet in this respect, peace will depend on the implementation timeframes. There are European borders, so we therefore need a European border guard corps to protect them - this is something for FRONTEX. And we must create a European ESTA quickly.

You have just given your views on defence very clearly, Mr President, a subject you know well... despite the powerful Luxembourgish army you have brought up! And I thank you for this. Proposals have been made, some of which you have endorsed, and yet progress in this area is much more sluggish.

The French army - and I thank you for your words - will not be able to act as the European army indefinitely, even if we take our responsibilities, and over the course of the next presidential term in France, defense spending will nevertheless have to reach 2% of GDP. We must modernise our armed forces, used both for internal and especially external missions. And there too, the clock is ticking.

3.2. Growth and employment

But the main concerns of the people are naturally also growth, and above all, jobs.

We have all been very verbose in recent years with regard to the mathematical rules behind the Treaties, we have dedicated a considerable amount of energy to this, and Europe has ultimately become synonymous with deficit reduction.

Yet for the last ten years, Europe has been lagging behind its major partners. The situation is improving slowly. We all know that this returning growth is too dependent solely on the monetary policy conducted by the European Central Bank - though I would like to recognise the action and imagination of Mario DRAGHI. But we know that is untenable in the long term.

It is up to Governments, and up to the Union to shoulder the responsibility of growth and employment policies.

While our environment is undergoing the digital transformation, restricted by climate requirements and the stagnation of our demographics - you have reminded

us, this is a fundamental element -, I believe that we need a genuine growth policy, one that integrates the fact that the levels of growth will no longer be those we have known in the past, that this sustainable growth furthermore must change. We need a real growth policy that does not simply concern competition, even if that is also important. This is the direction of my policy since I have been Prime Minister.

But I know that this is a major point of disagreement with our major partner Germany, but I make no apology for it. We can continue our debate, which is always more or less the same, on the relations between France and Germany - and I'll come back to this, this relation is obviously essential. But to have a fruitful relationship, it is also necessary to present the problems. I quickly mentioned - as I had in Munich a little more than a year ago - the migration question, but there is also the economic question.

France has reduced its deficit and has carried out difficult reforms, which, I hope, will allow it to leverage its recovery more fully. And in these reforms, there are of course the structural reforms concerning the competitiveness of our enterprises or the labour market.

We can always go even further, do better, and I don't doubt that for an instant. Yet we have been saying from the outset that countries in surplus must ease their financial constraints. I highlight here that there is a rebalancing underway with tax cuts in Germany announced by the Chancellor in the last few hours. But another taboo must be lifted: the Union must be able to contract debt in order to finance the projects that build Europe, which strengthen our ties. Recalling this is part of being faithful to Jacques Delors. This would give the JUNCKER Plan - which I commend and which France benefits from - additional reach.

Growth and jobs. We can boost them through the weight and strength of our internal market on the condition that everyone obeys the rules on investments. Yet the situation must not become a social or fiscal jungle either - this is perhaps what some major bankers are hoping for, but this is not what OUR Europe is.

We must put a stop to abuse in worker secondments - it is a subject that you were brave to tackle, Mr President. All workers employed in France, whether they are French or from another European Member State, are subject to the same social rights. They must enjoy the same working, safety and pay conditions. If

this is not the case, we open the door to unfair competition between workers, which would in turn lead to unrest. We need to discuss with French employees and workers who see this happening before their eyes in industry, transport and agriculture... It's a "fuel" one could say for populism. And without this change, without a clarification Europeans will not understand, and there, we must continue to act.

The same goes for major international corporations who play on the differences in tax systems between our countries to avoid paying taxes, thereby refusing to contribute to the facilities and infrastructure that they actually use – that's one of the benefits of Europe! We must be totally intransigent on this point, and I want to salute the Commission's decision with regard to Apple.

Growth and jobs also require us to defend European interests without shying away from continent nations who do not hesitate to defend their own! Let's stop being naive! We are Europe, the leading trading power in the world! Our voice must be heard!

I am in favour of free trade, but not if it results in unfair competition that is harmful to our companies and our production – I know what your concern was, dear Jean-Claude, concerning steel. These are our industries, our steel factories, our farms – whether dairy or livestock – and an ultraliberal wind in the area of agriculture has dominated Europe for too long. We have anti-dumping instruments, now we must use them!

When an agreement is good, it is signed. Yes, this is the case for our agreement with Canada, you've said this and I will say it myself in Ottawa next week. Yet when talks stall, get bogged down, with the USA, following fifteen rounds of talks, we stop pretending and say things clearly. We say, or at least France says that this cannot be left to continue in this way!

We must defend our industry while preparing it for the industry of the future. We have all the skills and priorities for tomorrow, all this human capital in which we must invest massively to become the champions of future growth markets.

Europe has the largest internal market in the world and yet we have failed to create digital players as powerful as those from the USA or Asia.

The next generation of Internet giants must be born in Europe, because we will have created the conditions for the incubation and development of tomorrow's colossi, by adapting the competition policy within the Union, an ecosystem of innovation – we see this well in France, where we have engineers who are demanded – company creation subsidies and access to financing.

3.3. Africa, a new frontier

A Europe that takes charge is ultimately a Europe A Europe that takes charge – and we discussed this a few days ago with Elisabeth GUIGOU – is ultimately a Europe which accepts its place and rank in globalisation. It is a Europe which has a certain weighting and makes itself heard, at a time when the USA, I repeat, does not intend to assert the same global role.

And a Europe which is looking more than ever towards the great continent of Africa. I am not ignoring, of course, the tensions with Russia. Nor am I ignoring the tensions east of our borders. But the Mediterranean and Africa are our new frontiers.

We must look to the African youth, and show it strong and real actions. Why not create, for example, an African Erasmus programme – we need to find another name than Erasmus; I think that Senghor would be a good reference –, which would open the doors to our universities and institutions more widely to them and would enable our young people to go to Africa more often, thanks notably to this youth from immigration in our respective countries? Why not redirect part of our development subsidies to finance new innovative African companies?

We must act, and we are for example, France and Germany together – today in Africa, in all areas. There is of course history, with all its bruises; but there is the expectation, the hope that an Africa who today, thanks to the cellular phone or solar energy, is transforming before our eyes, despite the enormous imbalances. The great demographic challenges, we have mentioned, for our continent but also for Africa – a billion and a half, not in 50 years but tomorrow! – the great migratory and economic challenges, the great climate challenges, the great challenges of religion and civilisation are being played out over there, in Africa.

I am launching a call: if Europe has a great design, a great investment to accomplish, it should more than ever be in Africa!

I believe, ladies and gentlemen, that Europe will live on if it strongly upholds all of these projects. It will die, as it was imagined by the founding fathers, by men like Jacques DELORS, if it is weak, and even if it only slows down.

I am aware that not all of the 27 States of the Union are ready. This should not be an obstacle for us. Let us move forward in smaller groups, let us lead the way on a few avant-garde issues: the creation of a common minimum wage, or the harmonisation of corporate tax. And if some wish to prevent us from building up a European defence, let us proceed with heightened cooperation. This is also a question of political will.

And naturally, in this new approach, the relationship between France and Germany - I come back -, even though it is not exclusive, of course, remains essential. Our two countries, even if they may differ - and I cannot apologise for that I recalled - have a special responsibility. The President and the Chancellor say it, embrace it, to propose, incite and bring about decisions; and from this point of view, the debate concerning the United Kingdom, concerning Brexit, will be important. The President was right, yesterday before you, to be clear and firm in his discussions and negotiations. And you said it: we can't have one foot in and one foot out. We cannot profit from the EU's advantages while avoiding its responsibilities.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The construction of the European project was the stuff of dreams at least two generations, my own and that of my parents. It is an extraordinary asset. It is also an obligation we have towards our young people! And I note by the way that during the Brexit vote, the youth voted massively to keep Great Britain in the European Union.

What do we want?

To be the generation that killed off the European project by repeatedly giving up? Or to be the generation that, despite the challenges and doubts - and both of these are numerous these days - was able to lift up this magnificent European project?

As for me, my answer is clear, and we will share it here. We need to roll up our sleeves, take on initiatives, and not be afraid to push hard, going beyond electoral deadlines, and being imaginative. The heart and the mind - coming back to Jacques DELORS - that is what we have the obligation to keep alive.

So yes, let us be proactive, ambitious! Our responsibility is significant! It is, I believe, our last chance. It is an immense, magnificent and historic task! And the political future of the European Union, since that is our theme, is more than ever our ardent obligation.

So, my dear friends, long live Europe! Long live OUR Europe!



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François Hollande, Tribune, Jacques Delors Institute, October 2016

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Jean-Claude Juncker, Tribune, Jacques Delors Institute, October 2016

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François Hollande, Video, Jacques Delors Institute, October 2016

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