

SPECIAL ISSUE
6 DECEMBER 2021

THINKING EUROPE AS OURS

MESSAGE FOR THE JDI'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

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This message from Jacques Delors was read out on his behalf by Pascal Lamy on December 6th 2021 at the Odeon theater in Paris for the 25th anniversary of the Jacques Delors Institute.

Dear President of the French Republic,
Dear Minister for European affairs,
Ladies and Gentlemen Members of Parliament,
Dear Ambassadors,
Dear friends,

I have been given the opportunity to say a few words to you who are so many here tonight. Twenty-five years ago, I wanted to create a study and research group on Europe, because I believe in the need to “think Europe”. Europe must be thought about over and over.

Since then, “Thinking Europe” has become the shared motto of the Delors Institutes today in Paris, Berlin and Brussels and it is a healthy mindset to have. European construction is not a fully-formed programme, a procedure to roll out, a miraculously irreversible design. It is never plain sailing, as you know. We must constantly rethink Europe in terms of what has been achieved, of what worked and what did not, and in terms of the global situation which is so unstable and can even be brutal. Sticking to past decisions and the status quo would amount to intellectual laziness and a lack of political courage. We must draw inspiration from the “founding fathers”, from their original intuitions and their daring, but to renew them, to broaden the horizon, to take other avenues towards unity, such as differentiation which has not been sufficiently explored.

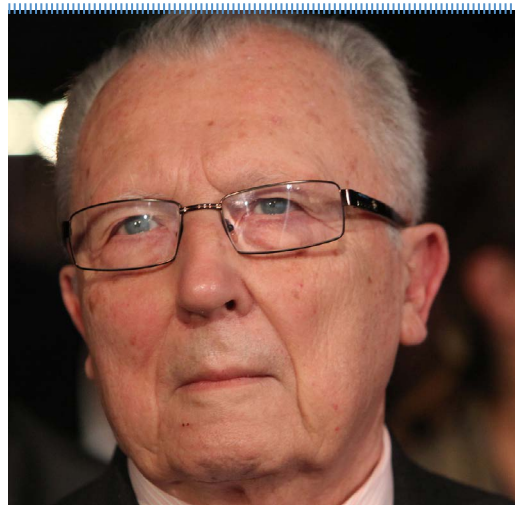


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The stimulus package and the debt contracted by the Commission on behalf of the European Union have shown that Europeans do know how to travel down uncharted paths towards integration. The COVID-19 pandemic has also led us to design an EU health strategy, which was until then almost inconceivable. Ideas and reality must therefore always be in a dialectic relationship. This is what “Thinking Europe” truly means. The Conference on the Future of Europe is an original means of doing this. I hope this initiative underway will receive all the political and media attention it deserves. Europe was originally conceived as a project for peace. Today, this project must also be thought of in terms of power; a budding global power that is both responsible and generous.

JACQUES DELORS

Founding President of
Notre Europe – Institut
Jacques Delors

Twenty-five years ago, I named the think tank we were creating “*Notre Europe*”, or “*Our Europe*”. I want to emphasise this plural possessive pronoun: *Our*. Are we able to “think Europe” as really ours? Can we consider European legislation to be our law and not law pulled out of thin air, that is forced upon us from above? Do we know how to understand European legislation and case law as something that connects us, that obliges us or is it viewed as a system that each State can flout as they see fit?

If Europe really is ours, it cannot simply be the Europe that France wants, or the one that suits Germany, or any other country, exclusively. It must not become the Europe desired by Poland or Hungary either. Neither does Europe belong solely to the European Parliament, nor can it be confiscated by the European Council. The Commission does not enjoy any more ownership of it either. It is, however, much more than the guardian of the Treaties. Through its initiatives, it is first and foremost the Commission that has the formidable task of thinking *our* Europe, while staying one step ahead.

Asserting *our* Europe –stressing the “*our*”– means that the Union belongs to each of us but also that it is essentially plural in nature. It is both a public good to be protected and a collective work to be furthered. I am delighted that the French Presidency of the Council of the EU has decided to highlight the concept of belonging to Europe. The meaning of this

belonging is twofold: Europe belongs to us as much as we belong to Europe.

For all our countries, today belonging to Europe means refusing to let ourselves belong to China, to Russia or even to align ourselves meekly with the USA. It means refusing to let our continent become fragmented once again and see its destiny slip through its fingers.

Belonging to Europe does not mean breaking away from one’s country. On the contrary, it implies remaining loyal to it. As Albert Camus said, “I love my country too much to be a nationalist”. The European project has never been an enemy of nations, which cannot grow and flourish in isolation. What better proof of their influence than their commitment to Europe?

May this key moment in European affairs that our country is preparing to experience strengthen this feeling of belonging, without which our project will collapse like a house of cards. Let’s make Europe ours. May this wonderful anniversary evening in Paris in this magnificent European theatre contribute to that.

I wish you an excellent evening.

JACQUES DELORS

Founding President of Notre Europe –
Institut Jacques Delors

Managing Editor:
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