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Sixty years. What next?

60th anniversary of the Rome treaty

Sixty years ago, in Rome, six nations deeply wounded by two world wars made the audacious gamble to move away from confrontation towards the harmony that common industrial and commercial interests would generate. Relying on gradual integration of European societies, it was a step intended to swiftly deliver a political community. Yet, over time, reality showed that political union could not automatically stem from economic integration but rather required the building of a community with a sentiment of shared destiny.

Today, even ridden with crisis, the EU remains one of the greatest ambitions carried by Europeans and the most powerful breath of hope for all those who were living under the oppression of authoritarian regimes. In a continent of bloodied past, it emerges as a pillar of peace and unprecedented cooperation among its peoples. Today, we Europeans can broadly move and live freely throughout the EU; we share resources and devise common rules, through common institutions, and have considerably improved the daily lives of 500 million Europeans; we have welcomed those democracies of Europe's South, that emancipated from their military dictators, and we reunited a continent once torn apart by the Iron Curtain.

Alas, these achievements cannot hide that over the last years, the crisis threatened social, democratic and economic progress and layd bare the EU's and its Member States' inability to offer a viable and cohesive solution. The stubborn insistence on austerity policies, combined with the lack of common instruments and resources, opaque and sometimes dysfunctional institutions **progressively damaged social cohesion, worsened inequalities and unemployment, increased public debt in many countries and hollowed out the promise of shared prosperity and solidarity**. Even free circulation is now put under threat. Politically weakened, the EU sets itself social and culture targets without all the means to achieve them; fundamental rights are openly questioned by some radical right wing governments with little challenge. And worse, "Europe" is now perceived by a growing number of Europeans as a bureaucratic leviathan trading away the common good for the service of supposedly "undistorted" competition and private interests, unable to deal with obviously common challenges such as migration, security and poverty.

This century's challenges are global: climate, population displacements, tensions and wars, digital technology, tax evasion, industry, resource preservation, pollution, biodiversity, agriculture, corruption and organised crime have no respect for national borders. Yes, the EU is not perfect. But it's our best chance to

address them.

That is why we are in Rome: to reaffirm that Europe is and remains our common home and to reassert our intention to defend it against the misguided calls of new nationalisms and extremisms.

Europe is our choice. Our duty is to defend it.

Europe's greatest wealth does not lie in its economic power, but in the value of its women and men. It is not a dead concept, it lives every day through its citizens, workers, students, entrepreneurs. It is for each and every one of them that the European project must provide a reason for defending it.

This means that the EU must be our common framework able to enlarge the scope of rights and freedoms and not restrict them. It means driving green transformation against the backdrop of the threats of climate change and the scarcity of resources, protecting the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink and the health of each of us. It means investing in youth, in education, in new economic activities and quality jobs, moving beyond the dependence on fossil fuels and the polluting legacies of the past. It means betting on a real EU budget to build solidarity, redefine welfare and fight exclusion and poverty. It means helping people escaping from war and misery, both those reaching our shores and those remaining far from us. It means bringing back the ambition to fight corruption, bad governance and weakening of the rule of law and stop seeking competitiveness through
deregulation.

And it means a new impetus for an "ever closer Union" echoing the hopes of 60 years ago.
The EU must become an effective multi-level democracy, freed from the rule of unanimity and of mutual vetoes. The succession of intergovernmental treaties and their amendments will not suffice. **The EU will need a real Constitutional process organising the separation of powers, the consolidation of fundamental rights and freedoms and laying down the objectives of the Union within and outside its borders.**
From Rome, Greens pledge to be an active part of a large alliance between civil society, trade unions, social movements and progressive political forces to lead towards a renewed pact for a EU wide democracy, which for us is a shared project and horizon; a community of values, an indispensable tool to build a just society.

Sixty years later, this is not just the time for commemoration, much less for nostalgia. It is more than ever the time to write together a new chapter of our common history, more cohesive and more sustainable.

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