

Il Presidente

09 MAI 2017

Brussels, 9 May 2017

Dear headmaster, headmistress,

Dear teachers,

Today is Europe Day and I am writing to you, headmasters, headmistresses and teachers of the schools of the European Union, to thank you. I wish to thank you for the passion and skill that you put at the service of our children on a daily basis.

European consciousness develops and is conveyed first in the classroom, and it is no coincidence that our young people are the keenest advocates of Europe. Thanks to my mother, who used to teach Greek and Latin, I grew up in surroundings imbued with an awareness and belief in the roots of European tradition.

Europe is, above all, a vision for life and of humanity and it is much more than just a market or a currency. Our civilisation was forged over centuries of exchanges, the blending of different schools of thought, debates over ideas, arts and sciences: from the merchants of Crete to Etruscan artisans, from the philosophers and dramatists of Athens to the lawyers and engineers of Rome.

Abbeys and monasteries handed knowledge down to us, the great universities and cities fostered a new humanism. The renaissance was inspired by this knowledge, while we were also opening up to exploration and exchanges across oceans.

Caravaggio to Rembrandt, Vivaldi to Bach, Shakespeare to Molière are all linked by an unbreakable bond, because everything that is culture means opening one's horizons, rather than withdrawing in isolation.

The mission of our schools is to hand down our European identity, in order to prevent the scourge of war and safeguard our values.

We are the only part of the world that does not practice capital punishment. The world looks to us when a journalist or political dissident is arrested for his or her ideas, whenever a woman is the victim of discrimination or someone is persecuted for his or her beliefs.

The historian Jacques Le Goff said that, "an individual's achievement in his intellectual responsibility is central to the European soul". And all this we learn— you teach it — in school.

The European Parliament itself is a 'Universitas'. It is the only EU Institution that is directly elected and, for that very reason, it has an enormous responsibility. As you do, headmasters, headmistresses and teachers.

There are those who destroy: together with you, we build. There are those who despair at the future of Europe: together with you, we work to transform hopes into reality. There are those who associate Europe to failure. We, together with you, work to make Europe a success story, able to respond concretely to the problems of our citizens.

Last week, we inaugurated the House of European History in Brussels. To me, it is important that the European Parliament has invested in this museum, which is open to all, free of charge, starting with students. Knowing our history means developing an awareness of our European identity, our true strength, and the main reason why we are together.

Sixty-seven years ago, the Schuman Declaration of 9 May marked the start of our great adventure. Together, sitting at the same table, we worked hard to move away from the pitfall of nationalism. It was not easy. The process ground to a halt in the face of disappointment and crisis many times. However, we never lost heart.

Together, we broke down obstacles, barriers, administrative burdens and national red tape.

Together, we worked to create a more open world in which people have more rights, contributing to helping bring many countries on our continent out from under the dark cloud of dictatorship.

On 25 March, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, I signed an important declaration together with the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the leaders of twenty-seven member states of the European Union. This declaration outlines the challenges that we face: regional conflicts, terrorism, migratory pressure, protectionism, social and economic inequality. But it also provides the solution: unity is the only possible choice if we want a Europe that is secure, prosperous, competitive, sustainable, socially responsible and close to the hearts of citizens.

The founding fathers set out to better defend the peoples of Europe together, looking towards future generations. The best way of paying homage to their courage is to display the same courage, by changing Europe, moving out of the impasse and continuing the journey.

The European Parliament is committed to obtaining results, and I am sure that I can count on your help in achieving these important objectives together.

I wish you a happy Europe Day!



Antonio Tajani