

EUROPE DAY 2018

Today, Europe celebrates Europe Day 2018. This is always an important opportunity to acknowledge the enormous progress which has been made towards securing a lasting peace on the European continent, offering a new form of cooperation among nations which strengthens the capacity of each of them, through their collaboration, to make significant global impact.

It is perhaps particularly interesting to note this in 2018, 50 years after the turmoil of 1968 which challenged so much that was taken for granted across much of the world. Students and workers in many countries expressed their frustration at their perceptions of inequality and stunted opportunities.

The journey across the 50 years has been rather tumultuous. There has been significant growth in the membership of the European community, now known as the European Union; a continuing evolution in European Union institutions; various periods of turmoil in the European neighbourhood, not least the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent inclusion of central and eastern European Member States; and economic ups and downs, not least the Eurozone crisis in 2008-10.

As the EU looks forward to the next 50 years, yet more profound change is ahead. The EU is the global leader in recognising the challenge of climate, and seeking strategies to sustain the future of the planet. New business models and technologies are likely to transform the ways in which people work and earn their livelihoods. Modes of communication and transport will alter dramatically. Security issues seem likely to continue to cause alarm and require particular responses.

The story of the EU to date has been one of deep learning about the possibility for nation states to build new ways of operating, new structures and new economies which strengthen their global positioning. In an increasingly multipolar world, the EU will be a significant voice for European nations and citizens in charting a course through the challenges ahead. One important lesson is that this is not a linear process: there are always ebbs and flows. There seems little doubt, however, that the EU will continue to evolve and explore new forms of global collaboration. May we all learn from its experience.

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