

Monsieur le Président Rajoy,

Cher Monsieur President Mendez de Vigo,

Cher Monsieur le Recteur Monar,

Monsieur le Maier,

Chers invités,

Chers camarades,

Nous nous trouvons aujourd'hui réunis devant vous avec l'importante mission de vous transmettre *un message* au nom de nos camarades du Collège d'Europe.

Vous attendez peut être que l'on évoque devant vous les problèmes auxquels l'Europe fait face, comme, entre autres, l'austérité, le chômage et les autres difficultés qu'on connaît tous.

Cependant, cela ne sera pas l'objet de notre discours.

Our message today will be a message of HOPE.

HOPE is a concept that is close to all of our hearts. Across Europe, from the West to the East, from the villages of Sicily to the fjords of Finland, ordinary Europeans have always aspired to live in peace and in prosperity, a dream that is evident throughout history.

In the South of Europe, in countries like Portugal, my home country, despite the negative sentiment and uncertainty brought on by the economic and financial crisis, our generation still has faith in a better future and is willing to work towards it. At this very moment, we, the young Europeans, are building that future.

From Spinelli, Schuman, and Monnet, the power of a united Europe has captivated and inspired generations. And yet, today the European idea is put to a test. It is up to us to embrace the message of our patrons Falcone & Borsellino – this message is telling us not to give up, to be persistent in our goals and to keep fighting for a common European identity and united Europe.

With the recent European Parliament elections and the appointment of the new Commission, a fresh cycle is beginning and we see a window of opportunity for change has appeared.

However, HOPE is not blind optimism. We are not denying that Europe is facing challenges. That is why what we, the students of the College of Europe, expect from the new Commission is honesty and hard work first and foremost. Challenges that we are facing are not specific to the North or the South, the East or the West, but of Europe, as whole. The new leadership must recognize this fact and move beyond national differences, in a manner that takes advantage of our diversity, this diversity which we feel all around us at the College of Europe, must be our biggest strength.

While undeniably Euroskepticism is on the rise as a byproduct of the tough economic situation, and it is popular to say that

enlargement is no longer a priority of the Union, it is important not to lose from sight that the very fact that countries, like my own, Serbia, aspire to join the European family. This proves the existence of sense and hope for the European project. A couple of weeks ago, the millionth Erasmus baby was born. This is a stark statement that Europe is not only a concept. Europe is indeed real and Europe is its PEOPLE across nationalities and country borders. Moreover, the number of multilingual Europeans is constantly on the rise. Europeans are getting closer to one another despite the geographical distance. Every day inspires hope, as we celebrate our unity in our diversity.

One does not have to go far from Bruges, and the College of Europe, to realize how valuable our unity is. Close to here, in Flanders Fields, our ancestors fell in large numbers, giving their lives for peace and understanding. From factories and fields, schools and universities, they have been brought to the battlefields and trenches of war. In our era, we can only but remember their sacrifice, and draw a valuable lesson from it.

It is wonderful to recognize that almost a century later, the European project received the Nobel Peace Prize marking more than a half of a century of peace in Europe. That is a true testament of the importance of the European idea. But, we must not forget our past in order to have hope for the future and be able to build it for ourselves.

There are more than 51 nationalities gathered here in this room. At the end of this year, after the College, when we embark on our individual missions, we must not forget the collective goal of our

Europe – Europe celebrating diversity, human rights, social cohesion, and freedom.

Moreover, the European leaders at the forefront of the Union must not forget that goal as well. And if they do, we must, just like Falcone & Borsellino once did, fight tenaciously to preserve the spirit of Europe. Wherever we go, whatever we do, we shall do it with hope - hope for a better tomorrow in our Europe, Europe of its people, that welcomes all with arms wide open.

MERCI POUR VOTRE ATTENTION - THANK YOU.