



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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José Manuel Durão Barroso

President of the European Commission

Speech by President Barroso: Towards a more cultural Europe

All European Academies (ALLEA) – Madame de Staël Prize for Cultural Values
Brussels, 9 April 2014

Dear President of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts,
Professor Gelders

Dear President of the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities,
Professor Stock

Dear Professor, Etienne François

Dear Minister of State Mark Eyskens,

Dear Laureate, Professor Luisa Passerini

Distinguished guests,

Dear friends,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking Professor Günter Stock for his very warm welcome. Thank you also to Professor Étienne François for your beautiful laudatory speech and to Professor Ludo Gelders for his very kind words of introduction. Indeed I would like to tell you that I very warmly accept your invitation to participate in the work of your academy. I am waiting for the invitation. I am sure that after ten years here in the European Commission in Brussels, I need also to have some time to immerse myself in the atmosphere of science and arts. It will make a change after the euro crisis, where I had to deal with much more immediate and difficult issues. I would also like to applaud ALLEA's key contribution in building a strong cultural and intellectual Europe and acknowledge your active support to a number of initiatives presented by the European Commission.

Almost a year ago, at the official launching of the project we have called "New narrative for Europe", Professor Stock announced the creation of a European Prize for Cultural values named after the great cosmopolitan European intellectual Madame de Staël; and he invited me to attend the first award ceremony. I immediately said I would be more than happy to come should my agenda allow me to do so.

So today I am very pleased to be able to join you for this ceremony; because I think it is absolutely essential for policy makers to work with you, men and women of academies, of education, of science and culture - or, to put it in Madame de Staël's words, to work with "l'association de tous les hommes qui pensent d'un bout de l'Europe à l'autre... ces hommes qui ne désespèrent pas encore de la race humaine et veulent lui conserver l'empire de la pensée." Je suis d'accord; "l'empire de la pensée."

When, representing the European Union, I had the honour, together with Herman Van Rompuy, to give the acceptance speech of the Nobel peace prize in 2012, I emphasized that culture and science are at the core of our European project as a way of going beyond borders. So culture and science are not some kind of accessory in the European idea. They are indeed a genetic element of the European project. They also show us what can be achieved when people meet and inspire each other.

And this is even more important today as we have to adapt to a fast-changing world while upholding our values and re-affirming our commitment to a shared European destiny.

So first, let me say a few words on the role of a knowledge-based society in our 21st century. Europe is gradually recovering from the deepest crisis since the beginning of European integration, the first crisis of globalization.

We are clearly in one of these transformative periods of history where we have to embrace change, overcome the status quo and take critical decisions that will reshape our future. We are in one of those moments where we cannot stand at the same position. We have to go further. Non progredi est regredi.

Today Europe is very different from what it was in 1957, having a truly continental dimension and a global outreach. We are also different in the world because the forces of globalization, combined with information technology, have resulted in a new dimension of interdependence that affects every country and every European citizen.

The pace of innovation is increasing dramatically. New technologies create new jobs and new industries and disrupt old ones. To meet the 21st century challenges we have to figure out how to cope with this fast-moving, ever-changing, increasingly competitive and interconnected world.

Skills, creativity, innovation, new science studies and new technologies are clearly part of the solution. They will make the difference. It will be our competitive edge.

But I have said said – and I want to repeat it again – I believe that part of this capacity to adapt to change is also to be found in the humanities, in some of the classic history, that classic studies that in fact enable us, men or women, to be more creative and with more sense of positive criticism.

But this is not only about economic prosperity. This is also about a more inclusive and cohesive society. This is about giving each individual a chance to fulfil her or his potential. This is about how our society changes and improves.

This is why education, research and innovation are at the very heart of what we have decided to call the Europe 2020 strategy, our European blueprint to get the economy back on track over the course of this decade. And if we want Europe 2020 to succeed, we need a strong sense of ownership from all the stakeholders, not only from the governments, experts or administrations, but from academia, from civil society, from schools, from people in general.

We need to do more and better to develop the right skills, to improve the free movement of people and ideas across national borders, to boost Europe's innovative capacities as well as public openness to innovation; and also to promote a more multinational and multidisciplinary culture bringing science and humanities together.

In our new global environment, our human capital and the creativity of our society are key game changers. And the European Union is indeed a catalyst for change.

For example, Erasmus+, the new programme building on the great tradition of the programme Erasmus, with a 14.7 billion euros budget over the next seven years – that is 40% more than under the previous period - will help, among other things, to address the skills gap by providing opportunities for 4 million people to study, train, gain work experience abroad, thus increasing their long-term job prospects.

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) which I took the initiative to create during my first mandate as President of the European Commission already contributes to bringing together higher education institutions, research organisations and businesses in new types of partnerships to boost Europe's science and competitiveness.

The completion of the European Research Area will create a real single market for knowledge, research and innovation and contribute to fostering a culture of excellence.

And just a last example, the Horizon 2020 programme, with 80 billion euros to be invested in research and innovation projects in this budgetary period, is 30% bigger than its predecessor, the seventh Framework Programme. As you know, the Commission - and myself – we had to fight hard for this to be saved in the difficult negotiations for the next Multiannual Financial Framework. I am happy that at the end we got this good result. This programme for science and research is also more coherent and simpler to use so that researchers and innovators can spend more time on their core work and hopefully less time on administration.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Madame de Staël wrote in *De L'Allemagne*: "Rien dans la vie ne doit être stationnaire et l'art est pétrifié quand il ne change plus." The same applies to our European Union. It would run the risk of being petrified if it does not adapt to changes. Europe stands right in the middle of sweeping transformations. It has to adapt to changes if it is not to be left behind but at the same time Europe has to uphold its values.

Europe is indeed much more than a market. Europe is fundamentally about values. It is primarily about a worldview that gives a central place to the individual, to the human person, and to respect for human dignity.

It is a Union that is not achieved through some sort of levelling process driving us to uniformity, as some caricatures try to present us, but through a fruitful blending of differences, contrasts, and even tensions, and surely through a common culture and common values.

And as I said recently in Berlin on the occasion of the presentation of the declaration on a "New narrative for Europe": tearing down walls and building bridges has been our European story over the last six decades and will continue to be our story for the years to come in today's globalized world.

However, some people are now trying to build new walls and dividing lines whilst we are living in an increasingly interdependent and competitive world where our European clout stems more than ever from our European unity and openness. We are also witnessing a growing feeling of disaffection among European citizens, and even indifference among pro-Europeans.

This is why I think it is necessary to revisit our past so that we can better grasp our achievements and overcome the existing deficit of confidence in our own strengths and skills, and embrace the future with more confidence.

We learn from our past that Europe's rich history and amazing reserves of creativity are some of the strongest cards we hold when it comes to building a prosperous and fairer European future.

We also learn from our past that the European Union and the core values it stands for - peace, democracy, freedom – cannot be taken for granted. They are not a given once and for all. They have to be fought for. And this is a fight that challenges each of us to think of the role we can play in building a stronger, more united and open Europe.

And I was happy to see in the declaration unveiled in Berlin something I think is very important, and I quote: Europe is "a moral and political responsibility, which must be carried, not just by institutions and politicians, but by each and every European."

We cannot build a Europe that is only considered to be the responsibility of the European institutions or – hopefully - also of the governments of Europe.

A sense of belonging to Europe, to a community of values, of culture and interests, is essential to forge this common destiny. Europe is indeed us, each of us. And each of us can make a difference in Europe and contribute to driving positive change.

This is what ALLEA is doing through its wide range of activities including the "Zukunftsort: Europa" project initiated by the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

This is also what professor Luisa Passerini is working on, looking at what holds us together. A work that has been beautifully described by Professor Etienne François in his laudatory speech, so I will not repeat what he said.

I can only say, when reading the impressive curriculum of Professor Passerini, that I'm very jealous of this curriculum. In fact, among all the books and topics that Professor Passerini has been working on during so many years, I can find a beautiful phrase. It said, at least in the version I've received: "Luisa Passerini has also conducted research on love in Britain, France, Switzerland and Italy". When my mandate in the Commission ends in the end of the year I would like so much to be associated with this research on love.

As Professor Passerini knows, I've been a young student and a young assistant of my great master, Professor Denis de Rougemont, the great author of "L'Amour et l'Occident". And precisely, I worked with him on these two notions for some time in his "Dictionnaire de Federalisme" – already posthumous published – and I love the idea of Europe being seen together with love. These two concepts are very important and, as a coincidence, it was with Professor Denis de Rougemont, when I was his assistant and student, that I've first visited the castle, the château of Madame de Staël, not far from Geneva, where we were at that time.

And it is a great pleasure and honour for me to have been invited to hand over the first All European Academies Madame de Staël Prize for Cultural Values to Professor Passerini.

I really believe that intellectuals have always played a pioneering role in the European project.

When she was just a young teenager, Madame de Staël met in her mother's salon all those who participated at the time in the incredible adventure of the Encyclopaedia, literally "all-round education", about which Jules Michelet wrote in his History of France: "the encyclopaedia was much more than a book. It was a collective enterprise... all Europe became involved."

That idea of linking Europe with knowledge and science is not, as you see, so new. Without falling in the trap of euro-centrism, that you very rightly criticise, I think we can be nevertheless proud; proud without arrogance of our European heritage. And I want to convey to you my respect, to all of you, who in your daily life, are able through the intellectual enterprise in which you are engaged, to work on these values that are so important for all of us in the European project.

Let me close by wishing that your European commitment and enthusiasm will be a source of inspiration to many all over Europe.

I thank you for your attention.