

Speech by Eva Madell MEP, President of the European Movement International

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,
Dear Mayors,
Dear MPs and MEPs,
Your Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,
Dear friends,

May I welcome you to the Ridderzaal on behalf of the European Movement International.

70 years ago, a group of Europeans, coming from many countries and all walks of life, gathered here, at The Hague, to craft a common future for our continent.

They left behind their political affiliations and their sectoral interests.

They came here as citizens, irrespective of their nationality or seniority, their profession or their vocation.

They gathered to build from the ashes of war and from the ruin of nationalism. To set the foundation of a new, united Europe. In peace, democracy, solidarity.

That was the beginning of European integration. That was the birthplace of the European Movement.

70 years later we have returned once more, to this famous city, to this great Hall.

To mark the occasion. To celebrate our history. To build our future. To Share Europe. Together.

Just like our forefathers and foremothers, we have gathered with certitude in our heart that what unites us is superior to what divides us.

We have assembled in this magnificent place to reaffirm our commitment to the ideals of the founding Fathers and Mothers.

To restate our conviction in the values that underpin European integration.

Democracy, unity, transparency, solidarity, sustainability, human rights and the rule of law.

But as we remember those first few steps in the long journey towards European unity we must not forget the challenges that lie ahead.

Our democracy is both threatened by those that don't believe in it and challenged by those that it is supposed to serve.

Populism is sowing the seeds of doubt, nationalism is spreading division.

Now more than ever we need to stand up for what we hold dear, we need to speak up for what we consider to be true, we need to come forward and be the change we want to see in the world around us.

If this gathering is to do anything, it must be to remind us that Europe is not just institutions or nations, politicians or politics. It is each and every one of us, citizens of Europe.

For Europe to prosper we need to be open and inclusive, break down the barriers that separate us and build bridges to unite us.

Just like 70 years ago, we need to leave behind our political affiliations and sectoral interests and Share Europe.

We need to build on our achievements with boldness and ambition.

The European Movement has worked for the last 7 decades to bring together all sides of society, across borders and beyond divisions, to pursue a future that is a common and prosperous for all those that call Europe their home.

We hope you can join us in the days, week, months, years and decades, in villages and towns, streets and venues, on-line and off-line.

Because together we are better.