

Word of greeting by Federal Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel

“I want Europe” - this short phrase is the quintessence of a campaign being presented in Berlin today.

Of course, many people will now probably say, “Yes, I want Europe – that’s obvious!” But is it so obvious, especially in times like the present, when we hear about the state debt crisis in the eurozone on a daily basis, when many citizens of Europe feel insecure as to what is to come, and when disappointment and distrust repeatedly resurface between the individual European countries?

We are now experiencing one of the most difficult crises in the history of Europe. This crisis has built up over many years – that is why it will take such a long time to overcome it, and that is what makes it so troublesome. However, I am fully convinced that the eurozone will emerge from this crisis stronger in the long run, and so will the European Community. You see, the truth is that we have already achieved an infinite amount together. European integration has allowed a dream of earlier generations to become a reality. We have it to thank for our peace, our prosperity and our good understanding with our neighbours.

This Europe, whose borders no longer separate, is taken for granted by young people from Finland to Italy - and by young people from Germany too of course. This is the result of exchange programmes and study visits, and I want there to be more of these. Now bloody conflict has given way to partnership and even friendship. What we said on the anniversary of the Treaty of Rome in 2007 is quite correct: we have united for the better. This is particularly true when we look to the future: none of the member states of the European Union can handle the tasks facing us in a globalized world alone. We need each other.

In spite of all the arguments and all the searching for the fine points of the best route to take, there is one thing we must not forget: Europe is not just a matter of the intellect – Europe is and remains above all a matter of the heart. Europe is our future. To protect and preserve this idea was and remains well worth all the trouble and effort put into it.

This is why I am so pleased to see the joint initiative of German foundations, which has set itself the task of making the idea of Europe strong again in Germany. You have succeeded in winning over an extremely wide variety of people for your campaign – people from politics and society, people from sports and culture, and completely ordinary people too. They are all united by one thing: a personal and emotional commitment to Europe!

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Eine Initiative der Engagierten Europäer

I would like to say emphatically at this point that I couldn't agree more with these people and their commitment to Europe. I am also glad that they have expressed it so publicly. It is remarkable for me that the foundations have come together to this end. Your commitment to Europe is very valuable indeed. That is why I would like to thank you very much for this initiative and wish the campaign every success. We are all Europe, you see.