



**Der Internationale
Karlspreis zu Aachen**
Für die Einheit Europas

**Citation by the Board of Directors of the Society
for the Conferring of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen
to
the President of the French Republic
Emmanuel Macron**

I.

The Board of Directors of the Society for the Conferring of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen have chosen to present the 2018 award to the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, in recognition of his vision of a new Europe and of the re-establishment of the European project, of a new European sovereignty and a close, restructured cooperation between peoples and nations. His passion for and commitment to Europe, his advocacy of cohesion and commonality, and his decisive stance against all forms of nationalism and isolationism set the right example, show the right way forward, and promote the right kind of contagious enthusiasm needed to overcome the European crisis. In the person of Emmanuel Macron, the Charlemagne Prize Society honours a courageous pioneer for the revitalisation of the European dream.

Through the award, the Charlemagne Prize Society also gives expression to the hope and desire of many European citizens that the proposals of the 2018 Charlemagne Prize laureate will inspire his European partners and contribute to a sustainable renewal of the European project.

As we near the end of a tense year of European elections dominated by confrontation with populists, radicals and nationalists, one date stands out: 7th May 2017. The election of Emmanuel Macron as President of the French Republic proved once again that Europe is indeed capable of generating enthusiasm.

On the offensive like very few others, President Macron has made the European idea the focus of his political commitment; on the offensive like very few others, he has sought confrontation with those who would question the project that has brought our continent the longest period of peace in its entire history; and on the offensive like very few others, his ambitious proposals have provided momentum for the further development of the EU, for "rebuilding a sovereign, united and democratic Europe". It is his firm conviction that "we need to be amenable once again to creating grand narratives".

President Macron is not concerned with institutional nitty-gritty; his focus is much more on the fundamental issues, on the grand European narrative with which he aims to win the population's support for the European integration process. "The problem is that debates over Europe have become disputes between experts and lawyers. Yet Europe was initially supposed to be primarily a political project! The EU never would have come about had it been up to experts or diplomats. It was created by people who had learned from the drama of our collective history. I am proposing a new beginning, not one in which it is first deliberated ad infinitum what instruments one needs, but one that follows from the goals we want to achieve. What do we want? What should our Europe look like? I want to renew the European dream and reawaken ambitions for it (Der Spiegel 42/17)."

Emmanuel Macron has declared a strong belief "that modern political life must rediscover a sense for symbolism". What better illustration of this than the unprecedented scene of a newly elected French President crossing the courtyard of the Louvre – not to the melody of the Marseillaise but to the music of the European anthem – to address his supporters and emphasise France's firm anchoring in the European Union.

II.

Emmanuel Macron was born on 21st December 1977 in Amiens, where he spent his childhood and attended the Jesuit school Lycée La Providence. Later he transferred to the Lycée Henri IV in Paris, where he completed his baccalauréat. He then went on to study Philosophy at the University of Paris-Nanterre and Public Administration at the Paris Institute of Political Studies ("Sciences-Po"). From 1999 to 2001, he worked as an assistant to the renowned philosopher Paul Ricœur, then from 2002 pursued training at the elite National School of Administration (ENA). After graduating from the ENA in 2004, he entered public service as an Inspector of Finances in the French Ministry of the Economy.

In 2008, he took a position as an investment banker at the private bank Rothschild & Cie., advancing to a partnership two years later. In May 2012, after François Hollande's election victory, Macron (an independent except for a short period as a member of the Socialist Party) joined Hollande's staff and became Deputy Secretary General of the Elysée. In August 2014, Macron advanced to the post of Minister of the Economy, Industry and Digital Affairs.

After founding the political party "En Marche!" in April 2016 in Amiens – aimed at addressing a broad spectrum of the population, breaking up ossified political structures and overcoming the conventional party mentalities on the left and right – he resigned from his ministerial position in late August 2016 and, in mid-November of the same year, announced his intention to run as an independent candidate for the presidency.

From the very start of his campaign Macron came out fighting, asserting that one could win elections if one had a clear vision of Europe and the determination to defend it. And, true to his conviction that the German-French relationship was the source from which the requisite "European momentum" was destined to come, in January 2017 he presented his ideas for an overhaul of Europe at the Humboldt University in Berlin – like many great Europeans before him.

In Berlin, he zeroed in on his core principle by quoting from the 1994 Schäuble/Lamers paper on European Policy: "Ensuring external security [...] is the precondition and the very core of any form of sovereignty of states. This is true for the EU as a community of states, in the sense that it is only so, through the community, that these states can maintain their sovereignty".

He would go on, in many speeches and articles, to refine and focus on this concept of sovereignty. He is absolutely convinced that, in today's world, the individual nation state cannot secure its sovereignty – only the European Union can do that.

Macron transformed the French presidential election into a referendum for Europe.

"If you are a timid European, you are already a defeated European," claimed Macron, taking the offensive in the fight against eurosceptics. And while, in some countries, people were indeed lamenting the fact that political positions among European democrats were getting increasingly difficult to tell apart, that voters didn't have any clear alternatives, in the second ballot for the office of President of France, the two candidates facing each other certainly could not have been more contrary in their fundamental convictions and their election manifestos.

Among the things Macron is fighting for are a Europe that is close to its citizens, a common economic policy and an EU Finance Minister, the strengthening of the Euro and a European investment programme.

His pro-European stance puts him in opposition to a renationalisation of his own country, and thus in opposition to nationalist and populist tendencies in the rest of Europe, too.

No wonder, then, that – not only in France but all over the EU – the election that Emmanuel Macron would go on to win with an overwhelming majority on 7th May 2017 was viewed as a 'choice of destiny'. With 66% of the votes, the 39-year-old was elected the eighth (and youngest ever) President of the French Republic.

III.

On the day after formally taking office, his first foreign visit was to Germany, where he met with Chancellor Merkel and agreed on an intensification of German-French cooperation, both bilaterally and on a pan-European level. This close cooperation, which Macron sees not only as a necessary condition for the success of Europe but also as "a work ethic", was already evident at the jointly prepared European Council meeting on 23rd June 2017, with the German Chancellor and the French President holding a joint press conference at the end of the meeting to evaluate the outcomes. With important conclusions reached concerning climate change, the fight against terrorism and a common security and defence policy, the summit sent out a strong signal of proactive energy, and, above all, new dynamism and confidence.

Having already set out the basic parameters of his reflections on the future of the EU during the French election campaign and in his speech at the Humboldt University, two days after the German parliamentary election Macron gave a milestone speech at the Sorbonne in Paris called "Initiative for Europe". "For too long," he bemoaned, "we were sure in our belief that the past would not come back, [...] we thought that we could settle into inertia, habit, putting our ambition somewhat to one side, this hope that Europe had to carry because we took it for granted and risked losing it from sight". For too long, Europeans had allowed Brussels to be portrayed as a powerless bureaucracy, and in doing so had forgotten that "Brussels is us, always, at every moment! We stopped proposing, we stopped wanting." But, Macron continued, "I will not cede anything, anything to those who promote hate, division and national isolationism. I will not allow them to make any proposals. It is up to Europe to make them, up to us to support them, here and now."

This was followed by a wide-ranging, sometimes extremely detailed and, above all, passionate plea for "rebuilding a sovereign, united and democratic Europe". No state alone can successfully meet the challenges of a globalised world. For Macron, the key to sovereignty lies far more in European cooperation, in a unified Europe that

- ensures security in all its dimensions, in defence, in the fight against terrorism, and in civil defence,
- reacts to the challenge of migration – with common protection of borders and a European asylum office and a common integration programme;
- focuses in its foreign policy primarily on the Mediterranean region and a new partnership with Africa,
- champions sustainable developments in energy and environmental policies,
- does not simply acquiesce to the digital revolution, but takes the lead in shaping it;
- and in the Eurozone as the centre of Europe's economic strength, stabilised through national reforms as well as through coordination of economic policies and through a common budget.

Fiscal and social convergence, reform of the Posting of Workers Directive, the introduction of a European tax on financial transactions, transnational lists for the European elections, downsizing of the European Commission – Macron is all too aware that many of his detailed proposals will evoke controversy. And he welcomes the discussion – in fact he actually demands dialogue – and not just on the governmental level but also in the general population. "We need to overhaul the European project, through and with the

people [...] That is why, if we want to move forward again, I'd like us to hold democratic conventions that will be an integral part of Europe's radical reform. Once we've defined the simple terms of a roadmap shared by the main governments ready to move in that direction. I'd like us to be able – for six months next year, in all the countries that so wish – to organize a huge debate on the same issues and identify the priorities, concerns and ideas that will fuel our roadmap for tomorrow's Europe."

With an eye on the upcoming 55th anniversary of the Elysée Treaty in January 2018, he invited Germany to enter into a "new cooperation treaty". After all, as he had previously noted, "On all the issues I have talked about, France and Germany can inject decisive, practical momentum".

Macron is a head of state with a claim to European leadership.

At the EU summit in Tallinn in late September 2017, he proposed the foundation of a "group for the rebuilding of Europe". He called on everyone to commit to intensified integration. But he was also very clear about the unacceptability of anti-reform countries holding back those who were open to reform. In fact, he proposed the development of a roadmap and method on the basis of which pro-reform countries could communicate and coordinate.

In early October, he took his own first step towards mitigating one of the most problematic chapters in European dialogue: refugee policy. He announced that, over the next two years, France would allow 10,000 refugees from UN camps around Syria and from Africa to enter its territory. He called for other EU states to follow his example, arguing that this was the best way to fulfil Europe's humanitarian obligation and to combine careful selection of the refugees who are really in need of help with simultaneous control over the volume of immigration.

On 10th October 2017, at the Goethe University in Frankfurt, the French Head of State reiterated his initiative for a renewed European sovereignty and emphasised the importance of culture and education as "the strongest cement of the European Union". It was imperative to provide every child in Europe with a horizon, to strengthen education as a remedy for the malaise of European civilisation and as a protection against the mistakes and confusions of populist tendencies, and, in particular, to improve the future prospects of children from socially disadvantaged segments of the population.

"If you have a vision, you shouldn't go to the doctor, he explained. Instead you should ask what we, together, are going to do about it.

President Macron wants to put Europe firmly back in the hearts of the people.

IV.

But it is not only the contents of his proposals that attract such great public attention; it is also the confidence and courageous spirit, the visionary imagination and, most of all, the passion – so sorely missed for far too long in the Member States – with which Macron is taking up the fight for Europe and giving new momentum to the reform debate.

It is with the same characteristic passion that the French President is demanding profound and challenging reforms from his own fellow citizens – and has placed himself at the forefront of those on the international stage who are committed to the advancement of climate protection.

"We all share the same responsibility: Make our planet great again." When US President Donald Trump announced the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement, it was Macron, in a

statement delivered in fluent English from Elysée Palace, who formulated Europe's response and, at the same time, assured all those scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs who were disappointed by Trump's decision that they would find a second home in France, where they were welcome to come and continue their work.

In November 2017 at the World Climate Conference in Bonn, he became more specific, formulating objectives for Europe and offering strong support for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which is at risk due to the US withdrawal. "Therefore, I propose that the EU replaces the USA, and France will meet that challenge." While expressing his hope that as many European states as possible would work with France to balance out the loss of American funding, he remained adamant that a solution would be found. "I can guarantee that starting in 2018, the IPCC will have all the money it needs and will continue to support our decision-making. It will not miss a single euro."

V.

In a time when our continent stands at a crucial crossroads, Emmanuel Macron has taken the offensive in the fight for Europe – with passion and courageous confidence. He has shown us how, with a clear commitment to commonality, our citizens can be won over for a renewal of the European dream. Although he has only been in office for a short time, Emmanuel Macron has inspired Europe anew and brought new momentum and new dynamism to the debate on deeper unification of our continent.

In the person of the President of the French Republic, the Board of Directors of the Society for the Conferring of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen 2018 offer acknowledgement and encouragement to a source of hope for a new chapter in the success story of a united Europe.