**CZECH REPUBLIC**

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*Let’s make Europe a welcoming place, let’s be the Europeans of the future.*

When you are a child you do not think about the world much. Your priorities are not to search for information. Your desires do not interfere into the field of international human rights, rule of law, you do not reflect on how a single usage of a plastic straw to drink your morning juice could do any harm to the world, either.

I live in a state called the Czech Republic. A state where the children get extremely privileged to go to school regularly and obtain a sufficient amount of knowledge to see further than others and become conscious of their actions. Today I realise that we should no longer pretend to be children and start writing our own future.

Our world is moving, changing, growing, developing, and so is Europe and all its inhabitants. Although one of the most harmonious continents, even Europe is facing various different challenges, from immigrant waves, Brexit, to the more severe issues, such as terrorist attacks, the most recent being in Utrecht, Netherlands[[1]](#footnote-1), harassment spreading both online and offline[[2]](#footnote-2), rape and gender inequality. We have, however, never been stronger than we are today. We have the powers and the good will to be advocates and to participate, to transfer our thoughts into action.

The Council of Europe is by the definition an international organisation that “aims to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law across the continent.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Founded on 5th May 1949, it celebrates its 70th anniversary this year. It comprises 47 states and tries to maintain all the premises behind their philosophy. Today we are in 2019, and no one can proudly say that we have achieved gender equality. Nobody can afford to say that the whole Europe lives in peace, nor that every person living in the member states of the Council of Europe is guaranteed to be treated the same way. The title and the theme of this essay is “Imagining the European of the future”, and my question is if there were such a thing called perfection, how would a perfect European of the future look like?

All the citizens of the member states have access to education. How is it possible then, that there are still such things as xenophobia, misconceptions, prejudice, and unhealthy fear? The ideal European of the future is an educated person. Educated meaning aware. Aware of his actions, words, beliefs because when we are aware we care more, we take part, and that is crucial. When we are interested, we acquire the splendid capability to understand and the minute you understand, your prejudice and fear vanish or reduce to a minimum. It is this type of being in-tune with your surroundings that makes violating human rights harder or less possible. At that point, religion, ethnicity, background, equality and other things do not play a major role in treating a person in a particular way. This is my perception of a European that treats human rights better.

Democracy is one of the cornerstones of an independent and well-functioning country. It is thanks to democracy that we can choose who is going to stand up for our rights and support our needs. What good is it when nobody takes action? The future is in our hands. There are more and more people who go and vote, but it is still not enough. According to the statistics of the EU elections in 2014, 43.09% of EU citizens voted, and only 28% of them were people aged 18–25, and 51% people who were 51 years old and older.[[4]](#footnote-4) How do we want to change something when we do not participate? The optimal European of the future would be an active person. A human being that does not only complain about all the things that are wrong, but who does something to change it. Who takes the initiative and tries to know more about the subject, a person contributing to the democratic system that they have chosen while serving themselves of all its benefits and advantages.

On 30th March 2019, Slovakia, one of the member states of the Council of Europe, chose its first ever female president. On this day, Slovakia showed that gender equality can and does exist when the citizens choose carefully. It was on this day we saw that people still do believe in “values such as humanity, solidarity and truth important to the society.”[[5]](#footnote-5) The European of the future should reflect the same way and add to democracy the values of human rights and equality.

The rule of law defines the relationship between a state and its citizens as supremely driven by the law, and is based on separation of powers to three branches. It says that the civil society is an equal partner to the state. I believe that a suitable European of the future should not only follow the rules and laws that are already given to them blindly, but should ponder about the possibilities that the rule of law gives them. Such a person should be able to create their own rules and laws, read and be interested in law, so that they can fully adapt it to all their needs. The law is here to serve us, to give us a feeling of stability and security. The right European of the future should be able to feel free and not tangled in law, and to understand the key issues to facilitate their day-to-day life.

To conclude, I envisage the European of the future as a person open to all the cultures, religions and ethnicities, who is able to embrace them and treat them with the respect they deserve. It should be a person aware of their actions, who knows when it is right to be an advocate, a person who is comfortable with the laws of their continent and country. The 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe only reminds us that these values are possible to maintain. The only thing that rests is to continue.

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