**Manfred Weber,** *on behalf of the PPE Group***.** – Mr President, what a great final speech in our row of Future of Europe discussions. I first want to thank our President for organising this format of the Future of Europe discussions and it’s great to have Krišjānis Kariņš now as the final speaker here in this plenary, with a great contribution, with a forward-looking vision for Europe and, we all can feel it, with your knowledge, Krišjānis, about how Europe works, how the European Parliament works. I probably can say that it would for the future be a great thing to have more prime ministers in office with the background of being a former Member of the European Parliament. That is what we really enjoyed today, thank you so much.

*(Applause)*

What I really like is that you started first of all with optimism. When we speak about Europe, about the future of Europe, it’s your country, about Latvia, the success story economically in the last years, all of this with the support, the contribution of Valdis Dombrovskis under his leadership. It’s a great economic success. It is a great success for the country when it is about the investments, which Jean‑Claude Juncker mentioned, and about the security feeling, that Latvians feel protected because they are part of this strong union of the European Union, and it is about Russia and the external threats towards us.

Success stories when we speak about our mandate at the European level, which Jean‑Claude underlined. In the last five years what we managed, what we have brought to the people of Europe, the success stories on management of the external border, the millions of new jobs created with the Juncker Plan, the sustainable growth and the front-runner to be at the front on the question of the fight against climate change on a global level. So we can be proud about what we did in the last five years under the leadership of Jean‑Claude Junker.

Generally speaking, I’m 46 years old. I’m the first generation of this continent who can say that I live all over Europe in peace and freedom. My father’s generation enjoyed peace, but half of the continent was locked up behind the Iron Curtain and my grandfather’s generation was in war, and that’s why the first generation, and this broader historic perspective, to have this in mind when we go out of this plenary and do our campaign. It must start with optimism. It’s a great Europe we are living in today and we will protect this against all the egoists and nationalists.

*(Applause)*

The second point you mentioned is about the concrete issues on the table. The answers on the demand, the questions, the concerns of the people. You mentioned migration – we fully support your idea about protecting our borders. The state decides who is on European soil and it is not the smugglers who decide. We need a resettlement programme, an ambitious one, and we need a plan for Africa, with probably in the future also a Commissioner for Africa who combines all the efforts we need, all the activities we do in regard to our neighbouring continent.

The jobs question – research is key. The regional funds are key, especially for the poorest regions in Europe. Trade is key, and the single market. I like your appeal to strengthen the single market because that’s the home base. Looking for new jobs, we first of all look to our strengths and not to the strengths of the others. And then climate change. All these things are on the agenda, but when we are speaking about the future of Europe you also have to be frank, because one thing is the content, the political approach, but the other is the method: how we come to results, and you know the problems.

On a lot of fields where we need a stronger Europe, we have the problem of the unanimous vote. I call it the problem of the unanimous vote. When it is about the Russian policy, we always need all 27 countries on board to come to conclusions and that’s why we have to stop. If we want to make the European Union into a strong political actor at global level, then we need the majority-making decision process in external affairs. That’s why the methods must be changed.

When I speak about methods, I think keeping the bridge‑building approach alive is needed. I tell you on migration: my own country Germany was, in the migration debate, against all the Commission’s ideas in regard to a binding quota on the question of distribution of migrants – until the year 2015, because then the migration problem arrived in Germany and immediately, in one, two, three months’ time, Germany changed its mind and immediately started asking for a binding quota mechanism on Europe. And what does this tell us? This tells us: don’t look from an egoistic point to Europe. We have to learn that we also have to take into account the problem of the others when we want to have a strong European Union.

*(Applause)*

Finally, on the method: a Europe which is democratic. We all know what we speak about. It’s a question of right of initiative here in this House, strengthening the investigation capacity of this House. The implementation of the rules must be checked also by this institution, and Krišjānis, I’m really grateful that you support the idea of the *Spitzenkandidat*, the idea that you have to show up before the elections to tell people, ‘I’m a candidate from all the parties in this House, and we have programmes and we ask for this support’. So a democratic Europe.

And finally, the future of Europe means that we have to protect the essence of Europe. We spoke about the European way of life, about democracy, independence of our judiciary, equal treatment of men and women, and, as a title, freedom: freedom of expression, of religion, of the press. We have to guarantee these rights for the future with an upgraded rule of law mechanism, give the world a positive example of how to manage positively society in a human way; that Europe is an offer, the European way of life is an offer to the world – that’s the future of Europe.

*(Applause)*