

# 'This is Europe' debate in the European Parliament: Speech by Robert Golob, Prime Minister of Slovenia, 13 December 2022

'This is Europe' – an initiative proposed by the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola – consists of a series of debates with EU leaders to discuss their visions for the future of the European Union. On 13 December, the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Robert Golob, envisaged a European Union that believes in the power of integration, the power of cooperation and the power of unity. His main message was the importance of the energy transition. In the context of current high energy prices, he stressed the responsibility of the European Council to be more decisive.

*Only when we come together on the basis of our strengths and virtues, and when we each contribute what we are best at, then we can form a community that will be the most successful.*

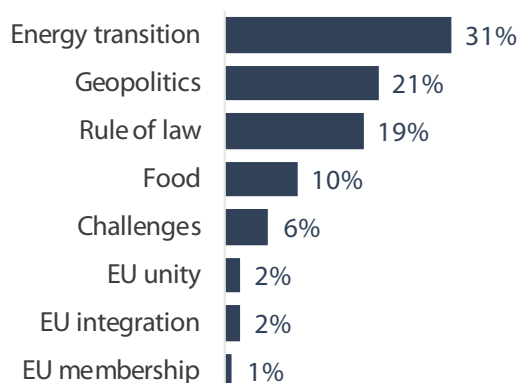
Robert Golob

## Background

Roberta Metsola launched the 'This is Europe' initiative soon after her election as President of the European Parliament in January 2022. Robert Golob is the sixth EU leader to have addressed the Parliament since its Conference of Presidents endorsed the initiative on 28 April 2022.<sup>1</sup> These debates will continue during subsequent sessions. The next confirmed leader to participate is the Luxembourg Prime Minister, Xavier Bettel, during the April 2023 plenary session, although other debates may take place before then.

A similar initiative by the Parliament between January 2018 and April 2019, ahead of the 2019 European elections, saw a number of EU leaders speak in the Parliament's plenary sessions about their views on the future of Europe. An EPRS analysis of the [Future of Europe debates](#) identified the similarities and differences between the views expressed by EU leaders.

Figure 1 – Time devoted by Robert Golob to various topics in his speech



Source: EPRS.

The initiative is particularly relevant in the context of the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#) (CoFoE), a bottom-up exercise allowing EU citizens to express their opinions on the Union's future policies and functioning. On 30 April 2022, the CoFoE plenary adopted 49 proposals (see the recent [EPRS analysis](#)), including more than 300 measures by which they might be achieved. As a follow-up to the CoFoE, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#), by a large majority, calling for a convention in accordance with [Article 48 of the Treaty on European Union](#). This call was backed by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, in her State of the Union [speech](#) on 14 September 2022.

At the June 2022 European Council meeting, the Heads of State or Government 'took note' of the CoFoE proposals. While calling for 'an effective follow-up', they did not provide specific guidelines in this respect, but just stated that each EU institution should do this 'within their own sphere of competences', rather than jointly

<sup>1</sup> An earlier speech to the Parliament in this context by Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas took place before this endorsement.



among the EU institutions. EPRS [research](#) has shown that there is significant convergence between the results of the CoFoE and the priorities of the European Council as expressed in its [Strategic Agenda for 2019-2024](#) and in its conclusions over the past 3 years.

## Main focus of Robert Golob's speech

While Mr Golob addressed a wide range of topics in his [speech](#) to the Parliament (see Figure 1), he devoted most attention to three themes: i) energy transition; ii) geopolitics; and iii) the rule of law.

### Energy transition

The main topic of Robert Golob's address was the energy transition. The Slovenian Prime Minister put strong emphasis on the fact that over-dependence on one source for gas provision, namely Russia, has enabled the weaponisation of that energy source over the past year. He stated that three factors combined were needed to respond to this situation: i) a reduction in energy demand; ii) demonstration of solidarity; and iii) action to address energy prices. Energy transition goes beyond the current situation, as it is the only way to reduce the impact of energy on our climate, helping the planet and future generations.

### Geopolitics

Addressing the theme of European geopolitics, Golob supported the enlargement process for both Ukraine and Moldova, as well as for the Western Balkans. He also praised the EU's response to Russia's aggression towards Ukraine, showing that when it was necessary the EU knew 'how to stand united'.

### The rule of law

Mentioning that it was the deteriorating rule of law situation in his country that had brought him into politics in the first place, Golob stressed that 'the rule of law is not something to be negotiated about, but is something to be enforced. And that that is the responsibility of all of us that are in the political system'. He went on to call for new ways to be found to address the issue of 'paid-for hate speech'.

## Specific proposals and positions

The Slovenian prime minister used the opportunity to present his views on how the European Union should advance in specific policy areas. He also made some new proposals, summarised below.

Table – Specific proposals made by Robert Golob, by policy area

Policy issue	Priority action and proposals (quotes)
<b>Energy policy</b>	'We will need to be more decisive in order to reduce the volatility in the markets. We will need to be more decisive to eliminate price spikes. And, we will need to be more decisive when it comes to the gas price caps'.
<b>Food</b>	'The food system that we are utilising right now is totally unsustainable for our future, totally. Unless we change the food production and food consumption in a very thorough way, we will not be able to meet any of the climate goals'.
<b>The rule of law</b>	'All the efforts done – especially by the Iranian women and with their inventive, non-violent ways of protesting against the brutality of the regime and for their human rights, their women's rights – is something to be really proud of; and we need to give them support as much as possible'.
<b>Enlargement</b>	'I welcome the decision of all the institutions to recognise both Ukraine and Moldova as candidates for membership of the European Union, and I welcome all the efforts, including by Parliament, to speed up the accession process'.
<b>EU membership</b>	'The effect of joining the European Union is transformative. We have changed. Membership of the European Union changes the country, it changes the outlook first of all of the people, and then the people make sure that the politics also change'.