
Ukraine needs heavy armoury, Europe must be able to take the next step

Addressing 'Night of European Ideas' in Berlin, President Metsola called for further support to Ukraine. "Tanks are needed. We must be able to take that next step."

Night of European Ideas, Berlin, 28th September 2022 - Speech by the President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola

"Europe is facing new times. We are tasked with dealing with the perfect storm of inflation, political uncertainty, food scarcity, cost-of-living increases and energy supplies dwindling, while electricity prices spike. All of this is framed in the context of war on our continent with the brutal invasion of Ukraine and political uncertainty that increasingly drives more people to the comfort of the fringes.

The task is huge. It is not easy. Not easy for us in the European Parliament, not for anyone in Germany and not easy for any Member State or Government.

Before I ask for more, let me thank Germany for all you have done. For all the military aid. For again welcoming all those fleeing war. For the tough calls that you had to make. For all the sacrifices endured and those to come.

But we are not at end of the war. We will be called upon to do yet more. And when we are at a point when war fatigue sets in, when poll numbers and op-eds become harder to read, that is when we need to dig deeper and find the resilience to see this through.

There are no simple answers, there are no guarantees - anybody who tells you that, does not understand the scale of the challenge. But I am convinced that we are up to it. That we can find the answers to the questions that our people demand from us. That our way is here to stay and that whatever is thrown at us next, we can face it better when we are together.

Here let me say that unity does not need to mean being homogenous. Europe does not seek to make everyone the same. We are different; we have different traditions, languages and

cultures.

Europe is about embracing these differences while ensuring equality of opportunity. Everyone must have the same chance, not necessarily the same viewpoint. That's our strength, even if President Putin sees it as our weakness. He misunderstands us.

It is also true that in this new world, we need leadership; we need Europe to be 'big on the big things and small on the small things'. We need compromise. We need the political courage to look past short-termism and we must reform.

I am convinced that Europe is on the right course, but being big on the biggest thing is about being able to respond to the real and present threat to Europe caused by the invasion of Ukraine.

Europe has responded quickly. I am proud of our response. It was necessary given the scale of the threat. We have not got everything right, but we have ensured that our way of life is protected. We have shown that everything we have preached for the last half a century matters, even when faced with the might of those who seek to sabotage it - especially then.

We cannot afford to be lulled into a false sense of security. We know the risk is existential and we must respond by helping Ukraine defend itself. That is why we moved so quickly to disentangle ourselves - at considerable pain - from Russian energy supplies. That is why we have helped Ukraine with financial and military support. That is why our sanctions have made Russia pay dearly and that is why we must continue to step up our action and support. Why we need to do more on freezing and seizing assets to pay for the re-construction of Ukraine. Why we need to look at the German Marshall Fund for example and how we best use all the options to help Ukraine access the funds it needs.

Since the beginning of Russia's aggression, the European Union has approved €7.2 billion in financial aid to Ukraine. We have provided €2.5 billion in support of Ukrainian armed forces and we will continue. We granted Ukraine EU candidate status, which gives countries a clear focus for development; even if we know that it will take time.

Now is when Europe's leadership matters. And we will look to Germany to help lead. Together we must do more. We must also understand that one country cannot be asked to withstand pain and sacrifice alone.

We are at a decision point. Ukraine needs weapons to survive. Most of its defence industry has been decimated, but many of our Member States have stepped in which is why Kyiv was

preserved in March. But in this next phase of war, heavy armoury will be required. Tanks are needed and we must be able to take that next step.

There are plans on the table. One of these is the Leopard Tank initiative to provide Ukraine with a brigade of around 90 out of some 2000 Leopard 2 tanks in different Member States. We know that even those that are not battle ready can be restored relatively quickly. This could mean a modern-standard tank made available quickly. The countries that provide the tanks could be reimbursed through European funds such as the Peace Facility and that means all will be able to contribute to the effort.

Another option could be a lend-lease programme that gives Ukraine direct access to our weapons industry, giving them more say over what they need, while the EU helps provide the funding they need. And when our Member States join forces, it means that no single Member State will suffer a too significant dent in its own defence capability.

Both options have their promoters and their detractors. Neither are perfect, But doing nothing is not an option. There is no time for complacency. We just need the political will to do it.

A brave new Europe is what is needed. That means we must shift from ad hoc solutions to a real security and defence Union, that complements rather than competes with NATO.

This change of paradigm also requires our union to take unprecedented and decisive steps to reduce our dependencies and to strengthen our strategic autonomy and resilience.

Friends, a brave new Europe means making things a bit easier, a little bit fairer, a little bit more dignified for people facing uncertainty like at few other times in memory.

Right now, people are worried about their bills, about getting to the end of the month, about the world they'll leave for their children. They worry about the future and Europe must be able to respond. When people feel that democracy does not help to address their loneliness, isolation and frustration, they will turn away from it.

Economy matters. Jobs matter. People being part of society matters. Dignity and education matter, because we know that if the economic gap in society means too many people feel alone and alienated, that is when they will feel that we have failed them.

Heating our homes, fuelling our industries, keeping our SMEs open and driving our cars is becoming more difficult. Inflation is keeping prices high. We know this. There are decisions that

we can take now.

We can act together to limit the impact: whether it is the capping of prices, fixing our billing and pricing systems, or de-coupling the price of electricity from gas. We can look at our long-term budget, the Multiannual Financial Framework, and see where a revision is needed and how we can make it work better in this new world. There are things that we can do, even temporarily, to offset the immediate pressure, while we implement long-term strategies. If ever there was a moment for 'more Europe', this is it.

Europe must offer its people hope. When we look to our East and see Putin's tanks, or China risen with a value set very different to ours; when we look to our North and see what Brexit has done; or to our West, and see the deep societal division exploited by Trumpism; - it is clear that the world needs Europe at its best. Reaffirming the values that Europe stands for is what will help people to recapture that sense of urgency and of optimism in the potential of our project.

Friends, Europe will only survive if we fight for it. If we stop taking it for granted. If we understand and explain its benefits. If we push back against those determined to undermine it. And if we listen.

If we are able to reaffirm that the constructive, pro-European politics of the centre, of moderation, of studied balance, still belong in our political circle – and that this place on the political spectrum needs to be consolidated and strengthened.

If we are able to reform. If we are able to reinvest in the potential of our European project.

If our night of European ideas becomes concrete proposals.

Thank you."

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