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Reinventing the Union: Narratives about Europe in State of the Union speeches from 2010 to 2020



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Abstract

Narratives about Europe are stories of shared European past, present and future, that provide meaning to the existence of the European Union and to the policy it pursues. In this thesis, narratives about Europe are analysed in nine State of the Union speeches, given by Commission presidents from 2010 to 2020, and situated in the theoretical framework of discursive institutionalism. A combination of deductive and inductive approaches was used in the process of detecting narratives, which proved to be very useful as it resulted in more narratives being detected than would have been the case if only one approach was applied. Thus, nine narratives about Europe were identified: six core narratives already well known in the academic literature ('Europe as a peace project', 'Europe of common values', 'Economic Europe', 'Social Europe', 'Green Europe', 'Global Europe') and three additional narratives ('Stronger together', 'Democratic Europe' and 'Digital Europe'). Their purpose was either foundational, legitimising the EU's existence, or functional, legitimising the EU's political action. While the frequency of using these narratives varied over the years, though with a slight upward trend, a few points of discontinuity were detected and discussed. Some narratives also changed their meaning, depending on the context and the ideas of Commission presidents. Ultimately, this thesis argues that Commission presidents act as agents of reinventing the Union through narration of stories about Europe. Reinvention through narration entails changing the frequency of using narratives, reinterpreting their meaning and constructing new narratives about Europe.

Keywords: narratives about Europe, State of the Union, Commission president, discursive institutionalism, reinvention through narration

Words: 13606

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1. Narrating a polity: The story of Europe

Every polity needs a story. Apart from relying on legal foundations of political authority, for instance, constitution and laws, political communities rely as well on stories that narrate a common “idea of origin, continuity, historical memories, collective remembrance, common heritage and tradition, as well as a common destiny” (Obradović, 1996: 196). These stories have a narrative structure, meaning that they have a beginning, a middle and an end (Roe, 1994). Their plotlines are very convincing and they are retold, over and over again, for decades or even centuries, thereby continuously being subject to reinterpretation by many different storytellers. Such stories, or *narratives*, give meaning to the polity’s existence and serve as a reminder of what members of the political community have in common, especially in times of crises and high levels of polarisation within the community. Furthermore, some narratives about political communities are widely accepted and ritualised to the extent that they have become political myths upon which the polity draws its legitimacy (Della Sala, 2010).

Many polities around the world have stories that congregate the members of that political community and that serve as symbols of that particular polity’s identity. To mention an example, Chafe (2012) writes about two competing narratives in the context of the United States, “[t]he first imagines America as a community that places the good of the whole first; the second envisions the country as a gathering of individuals who prize individual freedom and value more than anything else each person’s ability to determine his own fate” (Chafe, 2012: 11). Another example is the post-apartheid South Africa, where its new political leadership wanted to construct a symbol of a ‘new’ South Africa which would convey the message of inclusiveness and equality, so the narrative of South Africa as a ‘rainbow nation’ emerged (Baines, 1998).

As opposed to the two examples described above, which are both referring to the narratives about sovereign states, the European Union is commonly branded as a *sui generis* polity: post-Westphalian, post-modern, post-national, multilevel, a form of political rule based on rationality and functional interests (Della Sala, 2010: 2). Does that mean that it does not lean on narratives about itself, its origin, collective memories and common future? Hardly so, as it will be demonstrated further on.

The European Union has gone through many crises in the last ten to fifteen years, first the ‘constitutional’ crisis after French and Dutch voted against the proposed Constitutional Treaty and Irish against the Lisbon Treaty, then the economic crisis, sovereign debt crisis,

refugee crisis, Brexit, and finally the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of those proved to be very much an existential threat to the EU, as Eurobarometer data (European Commission, 2021) show that the level of trust in the EU in the last ten years has been constantly below 50%. In such challenging times, it is not unusual for political actors to seek trust and legitimacy for their political authority, by means of using already well-known narratives. Also, some additional new narratives can emerge in order to regain trust and generate support for political action, if the old ones do not seem to do their job anymore.

As a source where narratives about European Union could potentially be spotted, this thesis turns to State of the Union speeches, given annually by European Commission presidents. State of the Union speeches are a relatively recent institutional practice, initiated in 2010, thus coinciding in time with the many crises mentioned previously. The speeches were formally launched by the 2010 Framework Agreement on the Relations between the European Parliament and the Commission, with its Annex IV dictating that each year during the European Parliament's session in September, the Commission president "shall deliver an address, taking stock of the current year and looking ahead to priorities for the following years" (Framework Agreement, 2010). The State of the Union address is a first-class EU political event, covered by major media outlets, social media and even some public broadcasters across the EU. Furthermore, the speeches are an example of high-level discourse on the EU level, providing a perfect setting for many stories about Europe to be told.

1.1 Research question and purpose

Before presenting the research question, it is important to mention one disclaimer. As it is noticeable from the last sentence of the previous section, the term 'Europe' will often be used in this thesis as a metonym for the polity that is the European Union. Even though terms 'Europe' and 'European Union' are by no means synonyms, this is a conscious choice that the author of this thesis has made, simply because the term 'European Union' is frequently used interchangeably with the term 'Europe' by those who narrate the stories about the EU, which is also evident in State of the Union speeches. To support this claim, it is sufficient to look at how term 'Europe' is used, instead of 'European Union', even when Commission presidents (Barroso, 2013; Juncker, 2018; von der Leyen, 2020) reflect on the EU's relations with the countries of Western Balkans or Ukraine, which are indisputably part of Europe, the continent, but not European Union, the polity.

Therefore, the question that is raised in this thesis is the following: How were narratives about Europe used in State of the Union speeches from 2010 to 2020? This research question limits the scope of the thesis primarily in terms of focusing on narrative discourse with Europe in the centre of its plotline. Secondly, it points out to State of the Union speeches as the material in which narratives about Europe were looked for. Additionally, the institutional history of the State of the Union speeches limits this thesis by establishing a time frame, beginning with the first ever State of the Union speech in 2010 and, at the time of writing, the latest State of the Union speech, in 2020. The answer to the research question will, actually, be given by answering three sub-questions that are seen inherent to the main question, and these are:

- 1) Which narratives about Europe could be detected in State of the Union speeches from 2010 to 2020?
- 2) How frequently were these narratives used over the years?
- 3) What was the aim of using these narratives in State of the Union speeches?

The main purpose of this research is firstly descriptive, to unpack and analyse the State of the Union speeches by identifying the narratives about Europe employed in them. Secondly, this research aims as well to explain the usage of such narratives in State of the Union speeches. Thirdly, this thesis sets its sights on building a firm argument for narratives about Europe having a significant role beyond the context of State of the Union speeches.

1.2 Thesis structure and argument

The rest of this thesis is structured as follows. The next section lays out the literature review starting with several academic contributions on State of the Union speeches and continuing with presenting six already well known stories of Europe, or six core narratives about Europe. These narratives are: ‘Europe as a peace project’, ‘Europe of common values’, ‘Economic Europe’, ‘Social Europe’, ‘Green Europe’ and ‘Global Europe’. Following that section, the theoretical framework for this thesis is outlined, situating it on the intersection of constructivist and governance theories of European integration, and then, more precisely, within the discursive institutionalist approach. Research design, methods and material used in this research are presented in the subsequent section. In this section, a three-step process of identifying narratives about Europe is detailed out, which combines a deductive approach for

detecting the six core narratives about Europe and an inductive approach for detecting any additional narratives about Europe. After that, the findings on narratives about Europe in State of the Union speeches are presented. In total, nine narratives about Europe were detected, contextualised and discussed, with an additional section discussing the legitimisation of using these narratives. Finally, the last section gives an answer to the posed research question, sums up the key findings and formulates the main argument of the thesis, which builds on Commission presidents being the agents of reinvention of the EU through narration of nine narratives about Europe. Reinventing the Union through narration entails changing the frequency of narrating different stories, reinterpreting their meaning and constructing new narratives about Europe.

2. State of the art

In the next two sections, the state of the art is outlined, presenting academic contributions on State of the Union speeches and six core narratives about Europe. As it is evident in the following section, this thesis builds upon only a couple of academic resources that deal with State of the Union speeches. Hence, one of the aims of the thesis is also to offer its contribution to the existing literature, in terms of analysing a distinctive discursive setting that is the State of the Union speech. On the other hand, there is no lack of existing literature that examines narratives about Europe, which enabled this thesis to detect six core narratives as a departing point for the analysis of State of the Union speeches.

2.1 State of the Union speeches

When it comes to the academic community, State of the Union speeches have caught the attention of only a handful of scholars. Dinan (2016) has analysed the structure and content of Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker's speech in 2015, but also its differences and similarities with Commission President José Manuel Barroso's four State of the Union speeches.

Pansardi and Battezzorre (2018) have engaged with analysing seven State of the Union speeches (until 2017), putting emphasis on the discourse analysis of legitimization strategies employed by two Commission presidents in each of the seven analysed addresses. One of the legitimization strategies analysed in their article is *mythopoiesis*, "legitimation conveyed through narratives whose outcomes reward legitimate actions and punish non-legitimate actions" (Van Leeuwen, 2007: 92, as cited in Pansardi and Battezzorre, 2018: 859). Their findings suggest that Juncker's speeches, as opposed to Barroso's, contain elements of legitimization through mythopoetic narratives, with strong emphasis on 'common historical experience and memory' (Pansardi and Battezzorre, 2018: 866-867).

Af Hällström's work (2020) extends the analysis to the narratives of *values* and *crises* in all State of the Union speeches held so far. As she notes, "the values are commonly referred to [in State of the Union speeches] in their founding and central capacity, echoing what is outlined in the Lisbon Treaty" (Af Hällström, 2020: 9), while crises are framed as challenges threatening to undermine these values as foundation of the EU.

2.2 Six core narratives about Europe

The existing literature provides a good amount of insights when it comes to narratives about Europe. As mentioned in one of the first sections of the thesis, some scholars tend to focus their research on narratives about Europe as political myths, and thereby make an analytical distinction between narratives and myths (such as Della Sala, 2010; Lynggaard, 2017, 2019), while others fuse the two in their analytical framework (for example in Manners and Murray, 2016). The bottomline in this research is that both concepts, narratives and political myths, are essentially storylines that became important generators of legitimacy and support for a polity's existence and political action, and therefore are both included as 'narratives about Europe'.

What is, then, the story of Europe? In fact, there is no single story, but a plurality of stories told about Europe with the purpose of apprehending often very complex reality. While some narratives about Europe struggle to get into the centre of attention, there are six core narratives (Manners and Murray, 2016) that were closely looked at in this research.

The first, and perhaps the most well known, story told about Europe is the narrative of peace and prosperity, achieved and maintained for more than seven decades, and thus forming the foundation of the whole European integration project. It is considered an 'old Europe' narrative (Manners and Murray, 2016), serving as a foundational myth (Della Sala, 2010) to the European project, but more than rarely contested on the grounds of being detached from the younger generation of Europeans who don't have a living memory of the horrors of the World War II. This narrative came into question especially after the three failed referendums in France and Netherlands, and then also in Ireland, about the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties, respectively. It became clear that the story of Europe that has brought peace, prosperity and stability is not enough to generate sufficient support in these countries for further European integration (Della Sala, 2010). Manners and Murray (2016) write that this narrative had its peak in 2012 when European Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, while going through a very difficult period of economic, political and social crises.

In search for a 'new Europe' narrative, some scholars turn to the story of European common values and fundamental rights. Freedom, human rights, democracy and rule of law are some of the values today enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty, but they were not always in the foundations of the EU. Smismans (2010) shows how several intertwined discourses on fundamental rights and shared values developed over the years which presented these rights and values "as inherent in the European project and based them on a common European

heritage” (Smismans, 2010: 62). Manners and Murray (2016), on the contrary, do not find this narrative convincing enough “to constitute a recognisable story of what Europe is for most Europeans” (Manners and Murray, 2016: 191).

Economic narratives make up a great deal of stories about Europe. From a neo-functionalist perspective it is economic integration that drives the whole process of European integration into an ever-closer union. Narratives about ‘Economic Europe’ mainly accentuate stories surrounding the cornerstones of European economic integration, the single market and the common currency, as almost inevitable and irreversible integration paths, contributing to the perpetual peace between the European nations (Jones, 2010). ‘Social Europe’ narratives are usually constructed around the story of European welfare state and European social model (Manners and Murray, 2016), but also around the notions of solidarity and inclusiveness (Lynggaard, 2017, 2019). Although fairly sidelined in the beginning of the century, the ‘Social Europe’ narrative has seen its comeback in recent years, fueled by the economic crisis and rising social insecurity (Manners and Murray, 2016).

Another narrative about Europe is the story about ‘Green Europe’. Europe has been battling with the consequences of years of industrial expansion, pollution and environmental carelessness, while at the same time it has been pushing for global changes and increased ambitions in this department. Europe has achieved and maintained its “green reputation both among a majority of European citizens and internationally [which] provides the kind of legitimacy the EU polity requires as a whole” (Lenschow and Sprungk, 2010: 151). Finally, the narrative of ‘Global Europe’ tells many stories about Europe and its relation to the world and its place in it. These stories include, for instance, Europe as a civilian power, European normative power and multilateral, but also narratives of Europe as one of the poles of power in a multipolar world (Manners, 2010).

These six core narratives have already been institutionalised, as they are invoked in various official documents, strategies, or even policy proposals (Manners, 2017). That is why it was fair to assume that they are also present in State of the Union speeches, and why precisely these narratives served as a departing point in this research. Before going into how exactly these narratives were identified in State of the Union speeches, it is important to set a theoretical framework for this thesis, which is presented in the following section.

3. Confluence of constructivism and governance theory

This thesis can be situated in the confluence of constructivist and governance theories of European integration (Diez and Wiener, 2018), as the theoretical framework of this research combines insights and concepts from both strains of Integration Theory.

Analysing narratives about Europe fits into the wider recent trend of scholars engaging with many forms of discursive approaches, which have significantly gained ground and became a mainstream approach to studying European integration (Crespy, 2015). Constructivist approach in this thesis is reflected in conceptualising narratives as the main object of analysis. Narratives are, in essence, ideas, put together in a convincing storyline. These ideas carry meaning, however, only if we take into account the context of time and place. Schmidt (2008) takes ideas and context, and adds agency to them (who said what to whom), thus defining *discourse*, a “more generic term that encompasses not only the substantive content of ideas but also the interactive processes by which ideas are conveyed” (Schmidt, 2008: 305). Consequently, narratives are sequences of discourse.

Governance theory marked the second phase of Integration Theory (Diez and Wiener, 2018) with its focus being shifted from outcomes of integration to the sole “nature of the beast” (Risse-Kappen, 1996). Perhaps a pivotal push in this direction was initiated by Simon Hix and his call (1994) to comparative politics scholars to start studying the EU with already existing concepts and tools (Bache et al., 2020). In that light, a new institutionalist approach, which emerged in the 1980s as a reaction to the dominant position of behaviouralism in political science, started to deal with the EU as well. New institutionalism brought about a change in how institutions were perceived. They were not just formal institutions and organisations, but rather a whole variety of institutional features that now also includes, among others, procedures, rules, norms, traditions, conventions and culture. New institutionalism, in fact, comes in plural, as *new institutionalisms*, with three most prominent variants being the rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism and sociological institutionalism, each with its own understanding of institutions and how exactly they matter (Pollack, 2019). The main differing point of the three new institutionalisms is the driving factor behind the institutional change or continuity. For rational choice institutionalism that factor is mainly the actors’ self-interest. Historical institutionalism is, perhaps, better at explaining continuity than change, as it attaches much significance to path dependencies. For sociological institutionalism it is social norms that play a significant role.

3.1 Discursive institutionalism

In search of the theoretical approach that would reconcile all of the above mentioned pieces in this theoretical mosaic, it is precisely Schmidt's framework of discursive institutionalism that seems to fit the best. Schmidt outlines discursive institutionalism as an "umbrella concept for the vast range of works in political science that take account of the substantive content of ideas and the interactive processes by which ideas are conveyed and exchanged through discourse" (Schmidt, 2010: 3).

As the fourth new institutionalism, discursive institutionalism sets out its distinctive comprehension of 'institutionalism', suggesting that "this approach is not only about the communication of ideas or 'text' but also about the institutional context in which and through which ideas are communicated via discourse" (Schmidt, 2010: 4). Discourse occurs in two spheres, depending on the agency and the context. The first one is the policy sphere, in which policy actors, among themselves, exchange ideas on policy construction. Policy actors, such as elected politicians, officials, civil servants, expert groups or civil society, "seek to coordinate an agreement among themselves on policy ideas, which scholars have shown they may do in a variety of ways in a wide range of venues" (Schmidt, 2008: 310), thus, engaging in a 'coordinative' discourse. The second sphere is the political sphere, where political actors "engage the public in a 'communicative' discourse" (Schmidt, 2008: 310) and "bring the ideas developed in the context of the coordinative discourse to the public for deliberation and legitimation" (Schmidt, 2010: 3).

Discursive institutionalism also challenges the basic premises of the other three new institutionalist approaches, by seeing institutions in a more dynamic way, "serving both as structures that constrain actors and as constructs created and changed by those actors" (Schmidt, 2008: 314). These actors are 'sentient', or 'thinking and speaking', agents "whose 'background ideational abilities' explain how they create and maintain institutions at the same time that their 'foreground discursive abilities' enable them to communicate critically about those institutions, to change (or maintain) them" (Schmidt, 2010: 4). Change or continuity, within the discursive institutionalist approach, is driven by the sentient agents' ideas, who are, in turn, receptive to the "occurrences on the outside" (Schmidt, 2010: 13). Sentient agents, therefore, use ideas and context to "(re)conceptualize interests, (re)interpret institutional rules, and (re)frame norms through coordinative discourses of policy construction and communicative discourses of political legitimation" (Schmidt, 2020: 1183-1184).

Applying this framework to the EU, Schmidt (2006) noticed that in highly compound polities, such as the EU, coordinative discourse carries multiple times more weight than communicative discourse, as a relatively big number of policy actors is involved in policy construction, while there are only few channels at disposal for communicative discourse. With the introduction of State of the Union speeches, one more, institutionalised, channel for communicative discourse became available on the EU level. Commission presidents, who are the sentient agents in this communicative discourse, convey ideas of Europe expressed in a sequential form, thus building narratives about Europe. These narratives can also be regarded as an institutional practice which can either be quite stable and continuous or be subject to changes, depending on sentient agents' ideas and the outer context. Sentient agents, in this case Commission presidents, can achieve discontinuity in narratives by changing their frequency or their meaning and by creating new narratives about Europe, thus changing the way in which polity is narrated and reinventing it according to their ideas and the outside context.

4. Identifying narratives

In this research the process of using the theory and answering the research question was both deductive and inductive. The existing literature on the six core narratives about Europe presented in the State of the art section allowed for detection of those narratives in State of the Union speeches, deducing them with help of several keywords, or ‘signifiers’, that could be expected when using these six core narratives. However, during the process of qualitative reading of State of the Union speeches, there was a possibility that some other narratives about Europe would be identified. Therefore, an inductive approach of identifying storylines other than the six core narratives was also applied. The combination of two approaches, deductive and inductive, was meant to be a safeguard so that the chances of missing any other narratives about Europe is minimal. Before going further into the details of the research steps, it is necessary to lay out the research design and material used in this thesis.

4.1 Research design

Similarly to a great deal of research corpus that takes on a discursive approach, this thesis cannot simply ‘borrow’ or replicate an already existing research design in its entirety (Crespy, 2015). Research design has to be tailor-made, taking into account the research question and the research purpose, and it has to be laid out in detail, so that it stands the test of empirical and methodological judgment of readers, other researchers and research traditions.

In the case of this thesis, research design had to be customised according to the aim of detecting and explaining the use of narratives about Europe in State of the Union speeches from 2010 to 2020. State of the Union speeches, as rare examples of a communicative discourse on the EU level, are a typical institutional setting for narratives to be (re)produced and, therefore, serve as the only case of analysis for this research, thus giving it characteristics of a case study. However, this research design also includes a dimension of time, as the State of the Union speech has been delivered annually since 2010, except for the years in which European elections occurred (2014 and 2019). Temporal dimension enables making comparisons between different years and different Commission presidents. Furthermore, an over time analysis helped this research in identifying trends or patterns in use of narratives about Europe. Overall, the research design of this thesis can be defined as a comparative temporal case study.

4.2 Mixed methods: content and narrative analysis

Analysing discourse, such as narratives, most often requires employment of qualitative research methods, and that is the path that was mainly followed in this thesis. However, a certain quantitative addition to the research proved as a very valuable tool for getting hold of relatively big amounts of text, but also for making comparisons and identifying trends. That is why this research was carried out within a mixed methods framework. Researchers have started to employ a mixed methods approach in recent decades as a way of cutting across the traditional dichotomy of quantitative and qualitative methods (Mayring, 2014) and benefiting from the best features of both. What is important to bear in mind, though, is that both qualitative and quantitative methods in a mixed methods approach should have the same logic of inference and quality criteria, as otherwise would be just arbitrary use of different methods with questionable methodological validity.

Mixed methods in this thesis were represented by content analysis and narrative analysis. Content analysis was used here as a method of manually assigning categories to excerpts of text, varying in length, according to an already established coding scheme, eventually with the purpose of quantifying the frequency of different categories. Analysis of narratives implied elucidating the sequence of discourse, identifying and reconstructing the plotline of the narrative. The identified plotline has to reveal “causal relationships between various elements, meaning the construction of stories where a phenomenon is clearly identified as the cause of a subsequent phenomenon” (Crespy, 2015: 108).

4.3 Sources of data

The source of data for this thesis were all nine State of the Union speeches given so far, in the form as published by the Press service of the European Commission. They are available for reading on the official website of the European Commission and can be downloaded from there as well. Although much of the context has already been given within State of the Union speeches, for more valid interpretation of data, other material was also used, namely media reports, Eurobarometer data and publications from non-governmental organisations.

Several dilemmas regarding the selection of data for this research came up when taking into account the institutional environment in which the speech is given, and that is the State of the Union debate in the European Parliament. The State of the Union speech is the main, but only one, constituting part of the State of the Union event, which also includes

immediate feedback from the leaders of political groups, other members of European Parliament and representatives of the presiding member state of the Council, giving this event a more deliberative form.

The first dilemma was whether to include the feedback from the members of European Parliament and the representatives of the Council in this research, or to leave the focus solely on the Commission presidents' speeches. Here, this thesis took the side of the existing literature (Dinan, 2016; Pansardi and Battezzato, 2018; Af Hällström, 2020) that does not analyse other actors' statements in the State of the Union debate, for the reasons of consistency and challenges of dealing with multilingual textual documents. Ever since the Parliament's decision from November 2012, all official transcripts of plenary debates are published as a single multilingual document, meaning that they are not being translated into all official languages of the European Union anymore, but that the statements recorded in the transcripts are published in the original language. In practice, that would mean dealing with 24 different languages at the same time, which was deemed undoable for this thesis. Additionally, since the thesis is engaging with analysing narratives, where linguistic features and differences between languages might play a fundamental role, consistency of sticking with English language texts was chosen over the broadness that would be acquired by including all contributions to the State of the Union debate. Speeches given by Commission presidents, although partly performed in languages other than English, are all available as texts translated into English. For the same linguistic reasons, the second dilemma of whether to focus on the official texts of speeches or the actual 'performances' of giving the speeches was also resolved in favour of official texts of the speeches, as published on the Commission's website.

State of the Union speeches are usually structured similarly, at least when it comes to the overall outline of contents that the speeches deliver, but they can vary in terms of length and order in which those contents are presented. All speeches, in some form, present the key points on the Commission's legislative agenda in the next year. Commission presidents also reflect back on the year that has passed and touch on important major issues that had to be overcome or some major events that happened. The main part of every speech is the Commission presidents' take on the current challenges and difficulties, or put simply, the Commission presidents' answer to the question of: What is the *state* of the Union today? Speeches usually also include ideas about the EU's future and visions of further integration. Some speeches, however, did not fit the usual structure, like Commission President Juncker's 2017 speech because the main part of the speech was focused very specifically on his

scenario of the future of European integration. Regarding the length, speeches contained, on average, a little over 6300 words. The first ever State of the Union was the shortest one, while the first speech of Commission President Juncker stands out as the longest one. To conclude this part, Table 1. below gives an overview of the nine State of the Union speeches:

Table 1. State of the Union speeches 2010-2020

| Commission president | Year | Title (optional) | Length (words) |
|----------------------|------|--|----------------|
| José Manuel Barroso | 2010 | - | 4390 |
| | 2011 | European Renewal | 5033 |
| | 2012 | - | 6073 |
| | 2013 | - | 5622 |
| Jean-Claude Juncker | 2015 | Time for Honesty, Unity and Solidarity | 10058 |
| | 2016 | Towards a better Europe - a Europe that protects, empowers and defends | 6069 |
| | 2017 | - | 6254 |
| | 2018 | The Hour of European Sovereignty | 5102 |
| Ursula von der Leyen | 2020 | - | 8298 |

Source: European Commission (links to all speeches can be found in the References section)

4.4 Three-step analysis process

Data analysis in this thesis was conducted in three steps, reflecting the composite nature of mixed methods approach. These steps were foreseen as three parts of a research process that would be repeated as many times as needed, going back and forth between the different steps, until assessed to have enough findings to answer the research question.

Before the first step, a few keywords and phrases, or ‘signifiers’, were suggested, in order to be able to search through the corpus of text and subsequently, narrow it down for

further analysis. These signifiers were chosen based on an educated guess about which words were likely to be used when narrating one of the stories about Europe. The list of signifiers for each of the six core narratives is provided in Table 2. here below.

Table 2. Signifiers

| Narrative | Signifiers |
|---------------------------|---|
| Europe as a peace project | ‘peace’, ‘prosperity’, ‘reconciliation’, ‘war’ |
| Europe of common values | ‘values’, ‘freedom’, ‘democracy’, ‘rule of law’, ‘human rights’ |
| Economic Europe | ‘single market’, ‘euro’, ‘growth’, ‘competitiveness’, ‘development’ |
| Social Europe | ‘social’, ‘equality’, ‘solidarity’, ‘employment’, ‘inclusive’ |
| Green Europe | ‘green’, ‘sustainability’, ‘climate’, ‘smart’ |
| Global Europe | ‘global’, ‘world’, ‘foreign policy’, ‘multilateralism’, ‘neighbourhood’, ‘Africa’, ‘United States’, ‘Russia’, ‘China’ |

Source: author

So firstly, the corpus of text was searched by the above-mentioned signifiers and parts of text (a few sentences or paragraphs) that evaluatively carry the meaning of six core narratives about Europe were extracted. Therefore, the unit of analysis was one ‘meaning’. Meanings were then coded by the types of narrative, Commission president in whose speech the meaning was detected and year of the speech. Secondly, once the first, more deductive, step has been finished, the remainder of the text corpus, that has not yet been identified as meanings that invoke one of the narratives, was approached more inductively with the aim of possibly detecting any new narratives about Europe that have emerged in the State of the Union speeches over the years. Additionally, in this step, other meanings that could have been evaluated as fitting within previously selected core narratives about Europe were looked for. Thirdly, the meanings were interpreted according to previously mentioned different codes, taking into account the external context of the time when each speech took place.

Special attention in the process of data interpretation was given to Commission presidents' reasoning of using certain narratives about Europe. Also, when data was interpreted, a special focus was, on one hand, on detecting trends of continuity of using narratives about Europe, and, on the other hand, points of change or discontinuity.

4.5 Narrative structure: Recollection-Relevance-Resolution

In the process of extracting meanings, the main guideline was that they should resemble a storyline and have a narrative structure. However, there is no unique narrative structure that could be simply applied in this research, as different authors define it differently, and customize it according to the material in which they search for narratives. The structure of a narrative will definitely vary depending on whether it is situated within a literary work, which is perhaps more prone to diverse and rich vocabulary, figures of speech and lengthy descriptions, or within a political statement as is the case in this research.

After the initial, informative, reading of the speeches, in this thesis narratives were operationalised in a three-fold structure, presented in Table 3. below with an example from Commission President Juncker's 2017 speech. The first part, the beginning of the story, is recollection: of past and recent events, of general ideas about Europe or the EU, of an overarching issue that the EU is dealing with at the moment. It serves as an introductory statement, setting forth the topic, atmosphere, characters, time and place. In the second part, in the middle of the story, relevance to the current situation or possible implications for the future are presented. This part of a narrative answers the question: Why is this important today or for the future? Finally, the third part, the end of the story, brings resolution through some concluding remarks and final thoughts on the topic. This element of the narrative structure serves as the part where Commission presidents prove their point or reiterate the main take-away of the story.

Table 3. Narrative structure

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Recollection | What is this about? |
| | <i>Europe is first of all a Union of freedom.</i> |
| Relevance | Why is this relevant? |
| | <i>Freedom from the kind of oppression and dictatorship our</i> |

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| | <p><i>continent knows all too well – sadly none more than central and Eastern European countries. Freedom to voice your opinion, as a citizen and as a journalist – a freedom we too often take for granted. It was on these freedoms that our Union was built.</i></p> |
| <p>Resolution</p> | <p>What is the conclusion of this?</p> <p><i>But freedom does not fall from the sky. It must be fought for. In Europe and throughout the world. (Juncker, 2017)</i></p> |

Source: author

5. Analysing narratives about Europe

Nine State of the Union speeches from three different Commission presidents were analysed in this research, starting with the very first State of the Union speech given by Commission President José Manuel Barroso in 2010, then his following three speeches in 2011, 2012 and 2013, continuing with the four speeches from Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker given from 2015 to 2018, and ending with the first speech given by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in 2020. Combined, well over 56.000 words witnessing Europe's ups and downs in the second decade of the 21st century. So, what stories about Europe do these speeches tell?

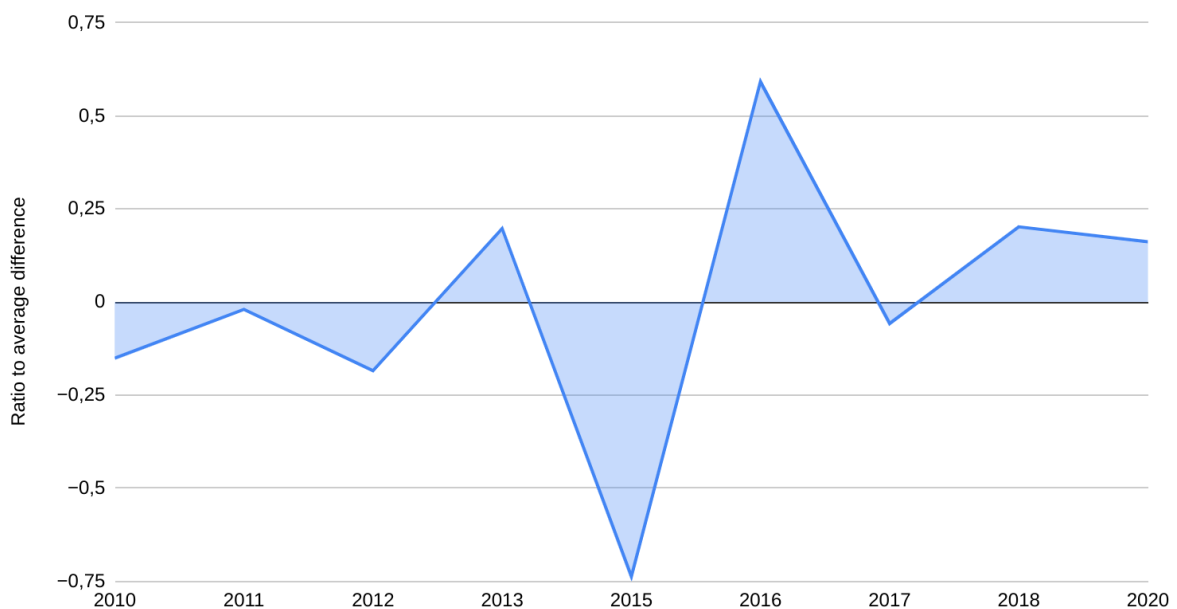
In total, 116 meanings were identified as narratives about Europe, following the steps and narrative structure laid out in the previous section. Three-quarters of the total number of meanings, or more precisely 87 of them, were identified deductively, using the signifiers listed in Table 2. The remaining 29 meanings were detected inductively, during the repeated process of evaluative reading of the nine speeches. Out of the 87 deductively extracted meanings, 8 meanings were first identified using signifiers for one narrative about Europe, but after close evaluation they were assigned to carry the meaning of another narrative about Europe. To illustrate that, one meaning in Commission President von der Leyen's speech told a story of rejecting discrimination against the LGBTQI community in some member states on the grounds that LGBTQI-free zones, as proclaimed in Poland, "have no place in our Union" (von der Leyen, 2020). This meaning was coded as 'Europe of common values' narrative. However, it was first detected by using the signifier 'equality', a signifier for 'Social Europe' narrative, which appears in the beginning of this storyline: "I will not rest when it comes to building a Union of equality" (von der Leyen, 2020).

That leaves us with 79 meanings, or a little over two-thirds of all meanings, deductively identified using one of the signifiers and correctly matched with the narrative which that particular signifier was connected to. Looking back on the choice of signifiers for each of the six core narratives about Europe, some of them proved to be of little help in the process of finding narratives. Signifiers 'smart', 'inclusive', 'reconciliation' did not come up very often in the speeches, as opposed to some very helpful signifiers such as 'peace', 'values', 'world', 'social', 'single market' or 'climate'. This short reflection on the method testifies to the usefulness of combining deductive and inductive approaches in order to get a wider scope of material and to have more data that is valuable for the analysis.

Narratives about Europe were not equally used throughout the years. With average employment of narratives being slightly under 13 per year, the two extremes were Commission President Juncker’s 2016 speech, with 20 narratives detected, and, on the other end, Commission President Barroso’s 2010 speech, with 7 recorded usages of narratives. Barroso’s next two speeches, in 2011 and 2012, both have the second-lowest recorded number of narratives used, 10. Next three scores are assigned to Juncker’s 2015, 2017 and 2018 speeches, with 11, 12 and 13 narratives used, respectively. Barroso’s last speech in 2013, has the third highest number of recorded narratives about Europe, 14, while Commission President von der Leyen’s speech in 2020 comes just one short from Juncker’s 2016 speech, with 19 narratives used.

Perhaps a more fair depiction of these figures comes when the frequency of using narratives about Europe is compared with the overall number of words contained in each speech. In Graph 1. below, which shows the difference between the ratio of number of narratives used in each speech to the average number of narratives and the ratio of number of words in each speech to the average number of words, two outlying speeches stand out, in 2015 and 2016.

Graph 1. Number of narratives and total number of words - ratio to average difference



Source: author

State of the Union speech in 2015 was the longest one wordwise, containing almost 1.6 times more words than the average, but 15% less narratives about Europe. On the other hand, the 2016 State of the Union speech was only 4% shorter in number of words than the average, but it had the most narratives about Europe of all speeches, 1.55 times more than the average. This graph also shows that there is a clear difference in frequency of using narratives about Europe, relative to the number of words, between the period 2010-2015 and 2016-2020, with one exceptional year in each period. In the first period, narratives about Europe were used less frequently, with the exception of 2013, while in the second period they were used more frequently, with 2017 being the exception. This discontinuity and possible explanations for it will be further discussed in the later sections of the thesis.

The total number of meanings identified as narratives about Europe (116), apart from the frequency throughout the years discussed in the previous section, is very difficult to interpret. Unfortunately, there is no available literature that would allow for comparing the overall number of narratives about Europe detected in this research with other similar research. What is clear is that, as opposed to Pansardi and Battagazzore (2018), findings here suggest that narratives were part of every State of the Union speech so far. Af Hällström (2020) does not mention the number of narratives as such, as her findings mainly focus on the frequency of mentioning specific expressions related to narratives of crisis and values. Furthermore, definition and operationalisation of narratives seems to be lacking in Af Hällström's paper, so it is extremely difficult to draw some parallels with that research.

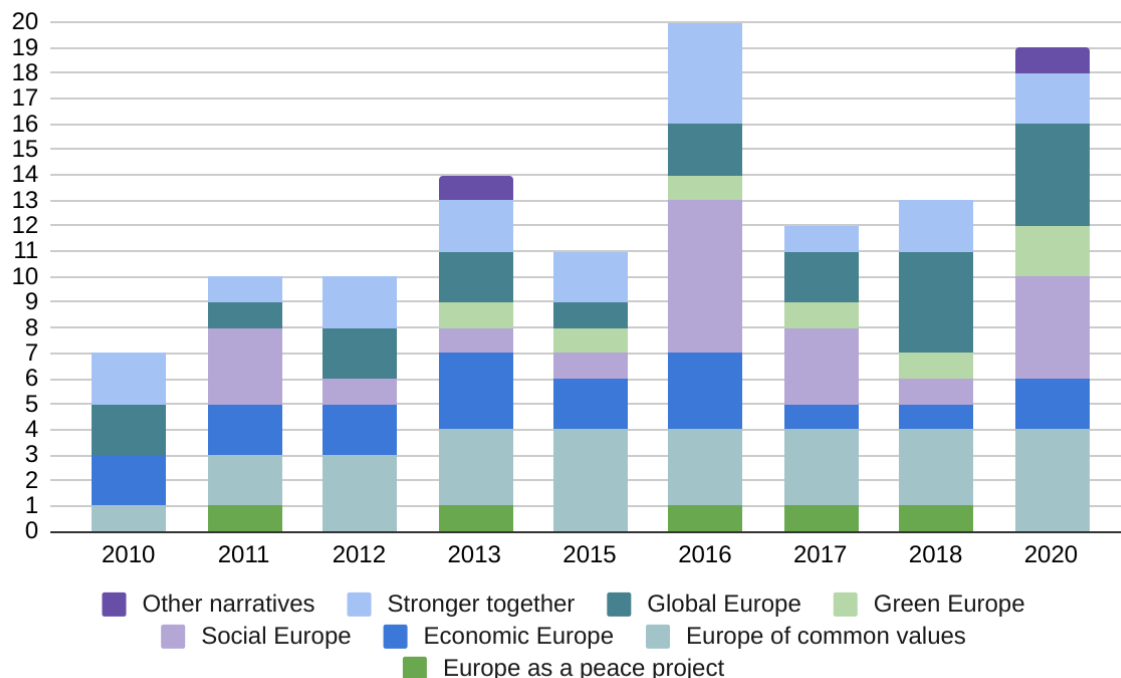
5.1 Nine narratives about Europe in State of the Union speeches

The deductive step of this research demonstrated that all six core narratives about Europe discussed in the State of the art section, 'Europe as a peace project', 'Europe of common values', 'Economic Europe', 'Social Europe', 'Green Europe' and 'Global Europe', found their place in State of the Union speeches. Furthermore, three additional narratives about Europe were identified inductively, namely the narrative 'Stronger together', which appears consistently throughout the years, and two other narratives detected only once each, and these are the narratives about 'Democratic Europe' (2013) and 'Digital Europe' (2020). Altogether, nine different narratives about Europe were detected in the 116 meanings extracted from nine State of the Union speeches.

The three graphs below show, firstly, the frequency of each narrative about Europe in State of the Union speeches, secondly, the share of each narrative in the total number of

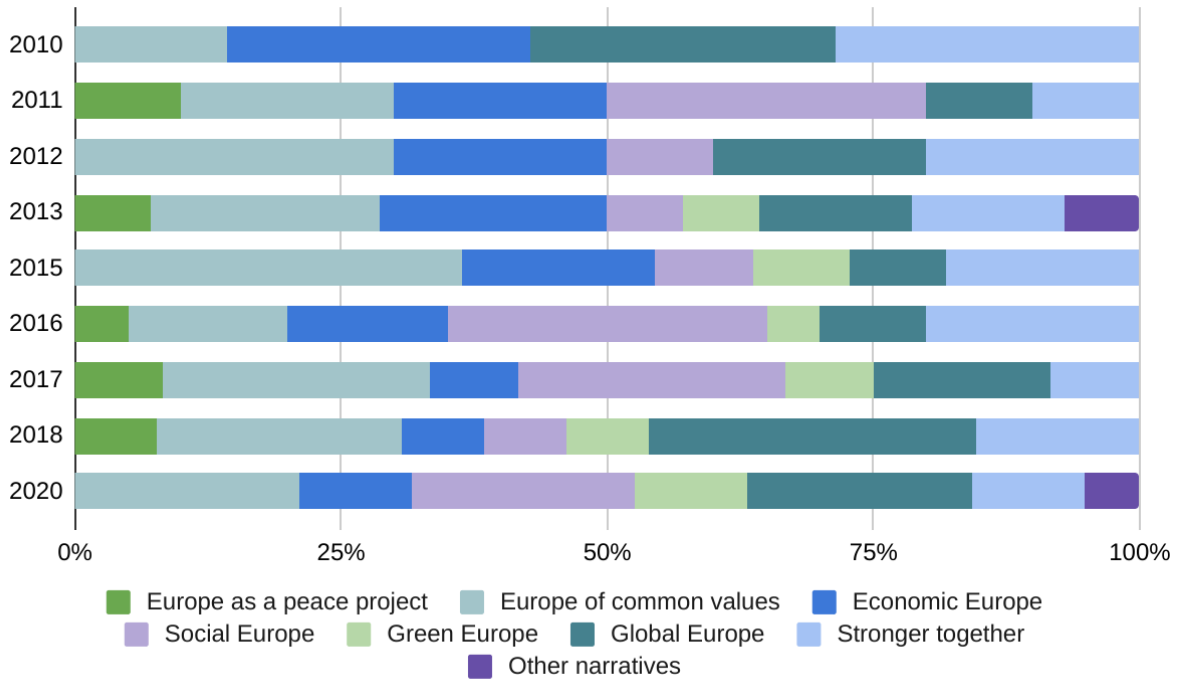
recorded narratives about Europe that particular year, and thirdly, the overall share of each narrative in all nine speeches. Please note that since the ‘Democratic Europe’ and ‘Digital Europe’ narratives were identified only once each, they are graphically shown together as ‘other narratives’. In the next sections, all of the nine narratives will be presented by using one or more examples from the speeches. Also, the use of each narrative will be discussed by taking into consideration its frequency, trends, highs and lows, and the specific context which is deemed relevant for that narrative. The full extent of all narratives about Europe identified here can be found in Appendix 1.

Graph 2. Types of narratives about Europe - frequency in each speech



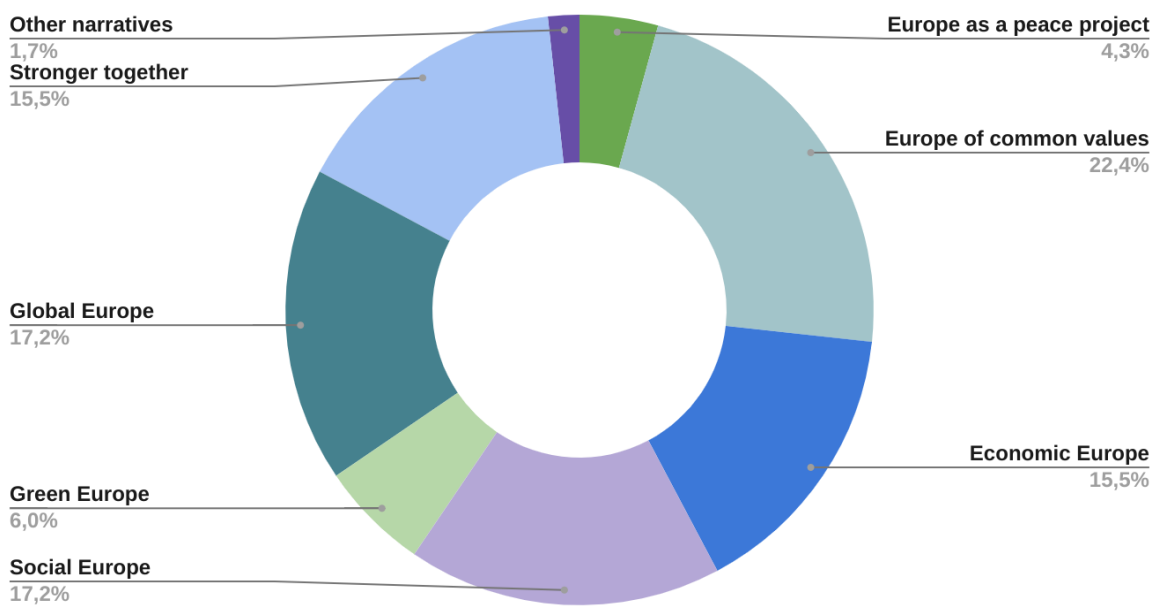
Source: author

Graph 3. Types of narratives about Europe - share (%) in each speech



Source: author

Graph 4. Overall frequency of narratives about Europe



Source: author

5.1.1 Europe as a peace project

The story about ‘Europe as a peace project’, although seven decades old, found its place in the majority of the speeches. It has, however, appeared the least, excluding the ‘Democratic Europe’ and ‘Digital Europe’ narratives. Only five meanings were evaluated to communicate this narrative. A classic example of this narrative was used in 2011 by Commission President Barroso:

At the end of our mandate, in 2014, it will be exactly a century since the Great War broke out on our continent. A dark period which was followed by the Second World War, one of the most dramatic pages in the history of Europe and the world. Today such horrors are unimaginable in Europe, largely because we have the European Union. Thanks to the European vision, we have built a guarantee of peace in our continent through economic and political integration. That is why we cannot allow this great work to be placed in jeopardy. It was a gift from previous generations. It will not be our generation that calls it into question. And let us be clear: if we start to break up Europe, if we start to backtrack on Europe's major achievements, we will doubtless have to face the risk of fragmentation.

(Barroso, 2011)

A similar storyline was identified in 2013, 2016 and 2018. The EU as the winner of the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize was especially emphasised in the 2013 speech. Commission President Juncker in 2017 brought forward a slightly different storyline, using personal experience as the recollection part of the narrative:

I have lived, fought and worked for the European project my entire life. I have seen and lived through good times and bad. I have sat on many different sides of the table: as a Minister, as Prime Minister, as President of the Eurogroup, and now as President of the Commission. I was there in Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon as our Union evolved and enlarged. I have always fought for Europe. At times I have suffered because of Europe. And even despaired for Europe. Through thick and thin, I have never lost my love of Europe. But there is, as we know, rarely love without pain. Love for Europe because Europe and the European Union have achieved something unique in this fraying world: peace within and peace outside of Europe. Prosperity for many if not yet for all.

(Juncker, 2017)

The rarity of this narrative in State of the Union speeches is one very important observation as it shows how the peace narrative is slowly being phased out. On the one hand, its relatability to many Europeans today is surely less evident, as it is based on the story of reconstruction after the Second World War, almost exclusively rooted in the experience of Western Europe, and retold many times by older political elite which is no longer present on the political scene (Manners and Murray, 2016). On the other hand, paradoxically, in the 2010s peace was something that many people in the EU's neighbourhood were longing for. One would expect that the narrative of 'Europe as a peace project' would be emphasised more frequently in that situation. A possible explanation for this paradox is given by Juncker in 2015: "We have more than 40 active conflicts in the world at the moment. While these conflicts rage, whilst families are broken and homes reduced to rubble, I cannot come to you, almost 60 years after the birth of the European Union and pitch you peace. For the world is not at peace" (Juncker, 2015).

5.1.2 Europe of common values

'Europe of common values' is a narrative about Europe that comes up most frequently in State of the Union speeches from 2010 to 2020. This story about Europe was invoked 26 times over the years, featuring storylines about different values that are said to be intrinsic to the European project. Utilisation of this narrative increased in the first three speeches and then stays solid at three to four mentions in each speech thereafter. Its share, however, peaked in 2015 when this narrative accounted for more than a third of all narratives about Europe employed by Commission President Juncker that year.

These values were sometimes explicitly stated, such as freedom, rule of law, democracy, equality, solidarity. On other occasions, the values were expressed as underlying assumptions that did not have to be mentioned unequivocally, or they were presented by exemplifying a value that is shared by everyone in the EU. In 2013, for example, Commission President Barroso recollected that the EU was pretty much occupied by solving the economic crisis, but clearly pointed out that the essence of the Union was something more than just the economy:

It is only natural that, over the last few years, our efforts to overcome the economic crisis have overshadowed everything else. But our idea of Europe needs to go far beyond the economy. We are much more than a market. The European ideal touches the very foundations of European society. It is about values, and I underline this word: values. It is

based on a firm belief in political, social and economic standards, grounded in our social market economy. In today's world, the EU level is indispensable to protect these values and standards and promote citizens' rights: from consumer protection to labour rights, from women's rights to respect for minorities, from environmental standards to data protection and privacy.

(Barroso, 2013)

The value that is overwhelmingly present in this narrative is the rule of law, which was reflected upon by all three Commission presidents. In the majority of speeches, however, the mention of rule of law was in the function of addressing the breaches of it, which only reflects a serious issue that the EU has had with upholding the rule of law in its member states in recent years.

The 2015 State of the Union speech was very much marked by the burning issue of the refugee crisis and solidarity with people seeking refuge in Europe. Ignited by disunity of EU member states in their stance towards the refugees, Commission President Juncker told the following story, with the aim of reminding all of his listeners that the fundamental right of asylum is something they all have in common and that this is the moment to show solidarity:

We Europeans should remember well that Europe is a continent where nearly everyone has at one time been a refugee. Our common history is marked by millions of Europeans fleeing from religious or political persecution, from war, dictatorship, or oppression. [...] Have we really forgotten that after the devastation of the Second World War, 60 million people were refugees in Europe? That as a result of this terrible European experience, a global protection regime – the 1951 Geneva Convention on the status of refugees – was established to grant refuge to those who jumped the walls in Europe to escape from war and totalitarian oppression? We Europeans should know and should never forget why giving refuge and complying with the fundamental right to asylum is so important.

(Juncker, 2015, text shortened)

5.1.3 Economic Europe

The story of Europe as an economic powerhouse, drawing upon the single market and economic integration, is one of the early narratives about Europe, together with the 'Europe as a peace project' narrative. It was also detected 18 times, just as the 'Stronger together' narrative, but its portion in the overall use of narratives about Europe decreased over time. The main storyline of 'Economic Europe' was the one about crisis, resilience and recovery. In

2013, when recovery from deep economic crisis was pretty much clear on the horizon, Commission President Barroso proudly narrated:

I still vividly remember my meeting last year with chief economists of many of our leading banks. Most of them were expecting Greece to leave the euro. All of them feared the disintegration of the euro area. Now, we can give a clear reply to those fears: no one has left or has been forced to leave the euro. This year, the European Union enlarged from 27 to 28 member states. Next year the euro area will grow from 17 to 18. What matters now is what we make of this progress. Do we talk it up, or talk it down? Do we draw confidence from it to pursue what we have started, or do we belittle the results of our efforts?

(Barroso, 2013)

In 2020, the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic were in the spotlight. Commission President von der Leyen told a story of how important the single market and free movement of goods was during the pandemic, and how crucial it is for Europe's recovery:

The pandemic reminded us of many things we may have forgotten or taken for granted. We were reminded how linked our economies are and how crucial a fully functioning Single Market is to our prosperity and the way we do things. The Single Market is all about opportunity - for a consumer to get value for money, a company to sell anywhere in Europe and for industry to drive its global competitiveness. And for all of us, it is about the opportunity to make the most of the freedoms we cherish as Europeans. It gives our companies the scale they need to prosper and is a safe haven for them in times of trouble. We rely on it every day to make our lives easier – and it is critical for managing the crisis and recovering our strength. Let's give it a boost. [...] Based on this strong internal market, the European industry has long powered our economy, providing a stable living for millions and creating the social hubs around which our communities are built.

(von der Leyen, 2020, text shortened)

Decreasing share of narratives about 'Economic Europe' is a trend which is visible since the first speech of Commission President Juncker in 2015. This could partly be a result of shifting priorities of the Juncker Commission. Perhaps even more importantly, after years of economic, financial and sovereign debt crises, the story about the single market and a strong

common currency was no longer a story that could carry the support for the European project, which was only amplified by the results of the Brexit referendum in 2016, so some other stories about Europe, especially ‘Social Europe’ and ‘Global Europe’, were used to compensate for that. The finding of decreasing share of ‘Economic Europe’ narratives is also supported by findings from Pansardi and Battezzato (2018), who detected a clear drop in frequency of mentioning economic values in State of the Union speeches from 2010 to 2017.

5.1.4 Social Europe

Although absent from the first State of the Union speech, the story of ‘Social Europe’ was invoked 20 times altogether in the other eight speeches. It was the sole most frequent narrative about Europe in both 2011 and 2016. The three Commission presidents depicted Europe as the right answer to, among others, the issues of unemployment, inequality, and tax evasion. Not only that Europe has the right answer to such problems, but also that Europe has already achieved very noticeable results in this area, thanks to its unique social market economy. Juncker, for example, resolutely described in 2016 what ‘Social Europe’ stands for:

Being European also means a fair playing field. This means that workers should get the same pay for the same work in the same place. This is a question of social justice. And this is why the Commission stands behind our proposal on the Posting of Workers Directive. The internal market is not a place where Eastern European workers can be exploited or subjected to lower social standards. Europe is not the Wild West, but a social market economy.

(Juncker, 2016)

A different take on ‘Social Europe’ featured the solidarity that Europeans could count on in times of extreme crises, natural disasters, or pandemics. The latter one, quite understandably, was very prominent in the 2020 State of the Union speech. In 2018, Commission President Juncker recalled the solidarity shown to Sweden in the middle of severe forest fires across the country:

We need more solidarity not for solidarity's sake but for the sake of efficiency. This is true in the case of our civil protection mechanism. When fires rage in one European country, all of Europe burns. The most striking images from this summer were not only those of the

*formidable fires but of the Swedish people greeting Polish firefighters coming to their aid
– Europe at its best.*

(Juncker, 2018)

Increased number of ‘Social Europe’ narratives in 2011 could be explained by the severe economic crisis taking its toll on people’s wellbeing across the continent. In 2016, however, it can be put into context with the Brexit referendum, which triggered many uncertainties, including the social ones. Also, it can be regarded as paving the way for launching of the European Pillar of Social rights in 2017. Another observation that could be indicative, is the increased usage of ‘Social Europe’ narrative in the period 2016-2020, relative to simultaneous decreased usage of ‘Economic Europe’ narratives, which could be interpreted as taking a step back from the image of the EU as a ‘neoliberal project’, which is a common critic from the left (Hermann, 2007).

5.1.5 Green Europe

‘Green Europe’, a narrative about Europe of relatively recent origin, was first detected in the 2013 State of the Union speech and it appeared seven times in total, once in each speech from 2013 to 2018, and then twice in Commission President von der Leyen’s speech. All three Commission presidents portrayed Europe as the frontrunner in fighting climate change and in decreasing carbon emissions, thus entrusting the EU with special responsibility for continued and enhanced green transition. An example of this narrative comes from Juncker’s 2017 speech:

Last year, we set the global rules of the game with the Paris Agreement ratified here, in this very House. Set against the collapse of ambition in the United States, Europe must ensure we make our planet great again. It is the shared heritage of all of humanity.

(Juncker, 2017)

Up until 2020, the main theme of ‘Green Europe’ in State of the Union speeches was the road to and from the Paris agreement. Von der Leyen expanded the narrative with the European Green Deal, a new overarching set of policy initiatives for making Europe climate neutral by 2050. Expansion of this narrative and its probable increased frequency in the coming years can be contextualised in the ongoing civil protest movement of mostly young people across the world, rallying for swift and determined action against climate change. Also, it can be put

in context of the unprecedented success of Green parties in 2019 European elections and in many national, regional, and local elections across Europe (Graham-Harrison, 2019).

5.1.6 Global Europe

‘Global Europe’ narrative was used 20 times in State of the Union speeches, just as much as ‘Social Europe’, coming in second place of most used narratives about Europe. Several distinct storylines were detected within this narrative. As the following example shows, one storyline was focused on expectations for Europe to be a global player, as if its leading role in the world was destined:

European action in the world is not only the best guarantee for our citizens and for the defence of our interests and our values: it is also indispensable to the world. Today it is fashionable to talk of a G2. I believe the world does not want a G2. It is not in the interests of the Two themselves. We know the tension that bipolarity created during the Cold War. If we want to have a just world and an open world, I believe that Europe is more necessary than ever. The rapidly-changing world needs a Europe that assumes its responsibilities. An influential Europe, a Europe of 27 - with the accession of Croatia soon to be 28. A Europe that continues to show the way, whether in matters of trade or of climate change. At a time when major events await us, from Durban to Rio +20, Europe must retain its position of leadership on these questions.

(Barroso, 2011)

This story of ‘Global Europe’ became clearly more frequent in recent years, as half of all mentions of this narrative occurred in the three latest speeches. Increased number of narratives about ‘Global Europe’ in speeches from 2017 to 2020 could be interpreted through the lens of changed positions of other global players, especially the United States, leaving a void in global leadership which Europe was bound to fill (Zalan, 2018). As Commission President Juncker stated in his 2018 speech, “the geopolitical situation makes this Europe’s hour” (Juncker, 2018). In 2020, additionally, much of the stories about ‘Global Europe’ were based on expectations that Europe will be the one leading the world out of the coronavirus pandemic, but also on the self-proclaimed geopolitical role of the von der Leyen Commission (Bomassi and Vimont, 2019).

The story of ‘Global Europe’ was also told in relation to Europe's approach to other parts of the world, especially Africa and the Middle East. Moreover, it was also employed

when talking about the EU's immediate neighbourhood in Europe, namely the Western Balkans and Ukraine. Another storyline focuses on Europe's global role of a normative power and a champion of multilateralism and international cooperation. One example that combines the storyline about Europe's normative power and its relation to others comes from Barroso's 2012 speech:

The appalling situation in Syria reminds us that we can not afford to be by-standers. A new and democratic Syria must emerge. We have a joint responsibility to make this happen. And to work with those in the global order who need to give also their cooperation to this goal. The world needs an EU that keeps its leadership at the forefront of development and humanitarian assistance. That stands by open economies and fights protectionism. That leads the fight against climate change. The world needs a Europe that is capable of deploying military missions to help stabilize the situation in crisis areas. We need to launch a comprehensive review of European capabilities and begin truly collective defense planning. Yes, we need to reinforce our Common Foreign and Security Policy and a common approach to defense matters because together we have the power, and the scale to shape the world into a fairer, rules based and human rights' abiding place.

(Barroso, 2012)

5.1.7 Stronger together

The 'Stronger together' narrative emphasises the increased capacity of the EU to act, whether internally or externally, when all member states join forces in order to reach a certain objective. This narrative was identified 18 times over the years, appearing at least once in every State of the Union speech. Its basic form is perhaps best evident in the following short storyline:

This is Europe's moment of truth. Europe must show it is more than 27 different national solutions. We either swim together, or sink separately. We will only succeed if, whether acting nationally, regionally or locally we think European.

(Barroso, 2010)

The peak in using this narrative about Europe, in absolute numbers, was in the 2016 State of the Union speech, when Commission President Juncker pleaded for overcoming divisions among the member states and EU institutions in order to resolve many problems that

Europeans were facing at that moment (Brunsden, 2016). An example of him recounting the ‘Stronger together’ story went along the lines of the following:

Europe can only work if we all work for unity and commonality, and forget the rivalry between competences and institutions. Only then will Europe be more than the sum of its parts. And only then can Europe be stronger and better than it is today. Only then will leaders of the EU institutions and national governments be able to regain the trust of Europe's citizens in our common project. Because Europeans are tired of the endless disputes, quarrels and bickering. Europeans want concrete solutions to the very pertinent problem that our Union is facing. And they want more than promises, resolutions and summit conclusions. They have heard and seen these too often. Europeans want common decisions followed by swift and efficient implementation.

(Juncker, 2016)

The speech in 2016 took place after a year marked by a heated debate, mostly between western and eastern member states, over the management of the refugee crisis, and shortly after the United Kingdom referendum in which the majority of voters decided that the UK should leave the EU. Apart from the UK, the EU was facing a serious rise of Euroscepticism in many other member states. Not to forget several horrific terrorist attacks on EU soil since the 2015 Paris attacks that certainly diminished the sense of security across the continent. When all of that is taken into account, it does not come as a surprise that the ‘Stronger together’ narrative was employed more frequently in the 2016 speech.

5.1.8 Democratic Europe and Digital Europe

Two final narratives about Europe were found in State of the Union speeches, ‘Democratic Europe’ and ‘Digital Europe’, and they were identified in 2013 and 2020 speeches, respectively. In the last paragraphs of Barroso’s 2013 speech, the Commission President looked ahead at the, then, upcoming European elections in 2014. On that occasion, he encouraged the members of the European Parliament to take on a mission of unfolding the process of decision making in the EU to the European electorate, describing Europe as a result of a democratic process involving both the EU institutions and the member states:

The polarisation that resulted from the crisis poses a risk to us all, to the project, to the European project. We, legitimate political representatives of the European Union, can

turn the tide. You, the democratic representatives of Europe, directly elected, will be at the forefront of the political debate. The question I want to pose is: which picture of Europe will voters be presented with? The candid version, or the cartoon version? The myths or the facts? The honest, reasonable version, or the extremist, populist version? It's an important difference. [...] Some people might campaign saying: Europe has grabbed too much power. Others will claim Europe always does too little, too late. The interesting thing is that sometimes we have the same people saying that Europe is not doing enough and at the same time that's not giving more means to Europe to do what Europe has to do. But we can explain that member states have entrusted Europe with tasks and competences. The European Union is not a foreign power. It is the result of democratic decisions by the European institutions and by member states.

(Barroso, 2013, text shortened)

‘Democratic Europe’ narrative was certainly in the function of a very heated debate over the ‘Spitzenkandidat’ process. The 2014 European elections were the first to be held under the Lisbon Treaty, which imposes that the European Council has to take into consideration the results of the European elections when nominating the future Commission President. Barroso, as he claimed back then, was the one who proposed “putting a ‘face’ on EU elections” (Gotev, 2013), thus making the election of the head of the Commission a result of democratic decision making as well.

In regard to ‘Digital Europe’, Commission President von der Leyen announced the 2020s as ‘Europe’s Digital Decade’ by narrating a story about how important digital technology was for everyday life during lockdowns across Europe caused by the coronavirus pandemic:

Honourable Members, Imagine for a moment life in this pandemic without digital in our lives. From staying in quarantine – isolated from family and community and cut off from the world of work – to major supply problems. It is in fact not so hard to imagine that this was the case 100 years ago during the last major pandemic. A century later, modern technology has allowed young people to learn remotely and millions to work from home. They enabled companies to sell their products, factories to keep running and government to deliver crucial public services from afar. We saw years' worth of digital innovation and transformation in the space of a few weeks. We are reaching the limits of the things we can do in an analogue way. And this great acceleration is just beginning. We must make this Europe's Digital Decade. We need a common plan for digital Europe with clearly

defined goals for 2030, such as for connectivity, skills and digital public services. And we need to follow clear principles: the right to privacy and connectivity, freedom of speech, free flow of data and cybersecurity. But Europe must now lead the way on digital – or it will have to follow the way of others, who are setting these standards for us. This is why we must move fast.

(von der Leyen, 2020)

Outlining the story about ‘Digital Europe’, von der Leyen did recognise certain shortcomings, for example in terms of Europe not doing enough on data protection. That caused some critics in Brussels to say that the Commission President “failed to praise the past regulatory efforts of the Union” (Stolton, 2020) in that field. Had von der Leyen done that, the ‘Digital Europe’ narrative would have been more persuasive. Nevertheless, it is fair to expect that this narrative will be more frequent and more well-grounded in future State of the Union speeches.

5.2 Foundational and functional legitimation

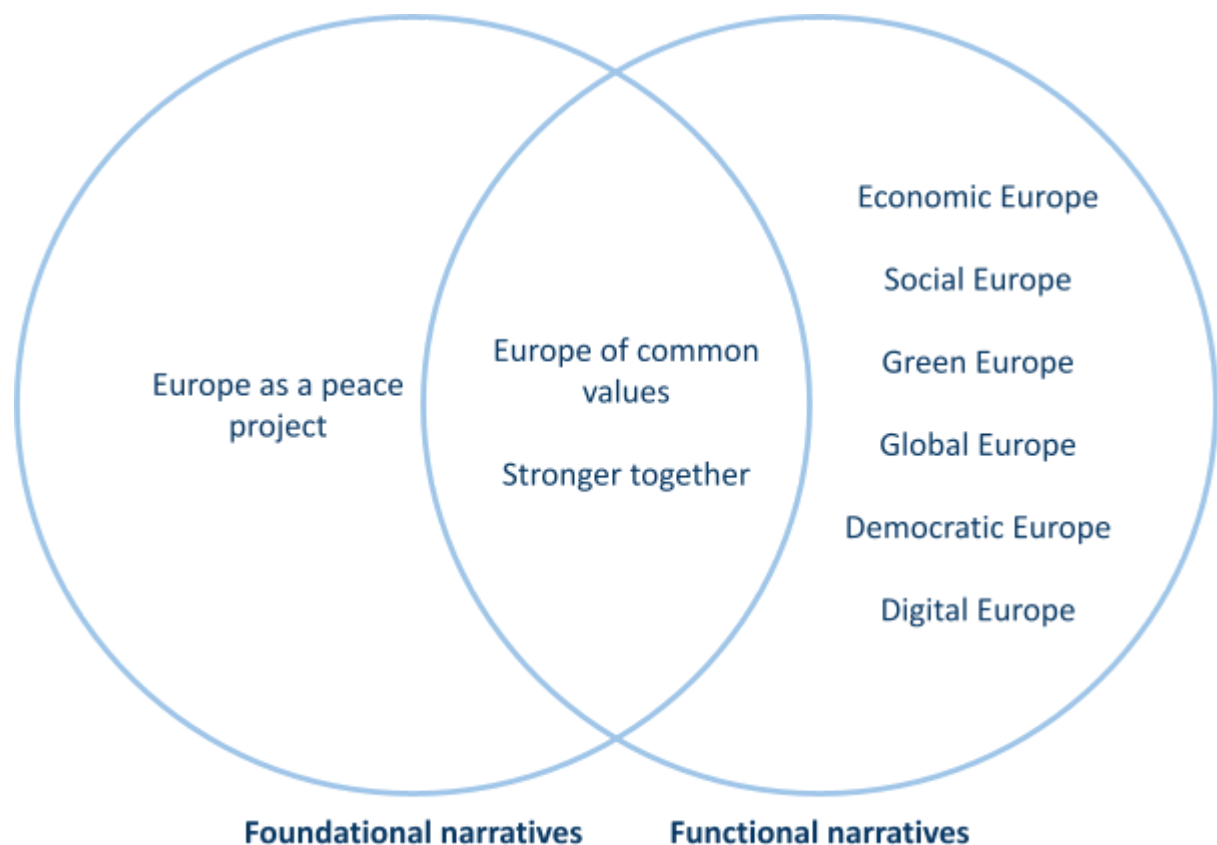
These stories about Europe did not find their place in State of the Union speeches by chance. Commission presidents reached for such narratives in order to convey a certain message, to justify certain moves and to achieve a certain outcome. When they narrated these stories, they certainly had in mind the public that was listening to their speech and accordingly adapted their targets. First of all, obviously, they targeted the members of the European Parliament, who are nominally equal co-legislators with the Council and, therefore, the ones who approve or reject Commission’s proposals. Second, they aimed some of their messages at the leaders of member states’ governments, quite openly accusing them of slowing down or watering down the proposals coming from the Commission. Third, they directed certain parts of the speech towards the European citizens, in an attempt to regenerate support for the European project and EU’s policies.

Along the lines of what is mentioned above, a distinction can be made when analysing the reasons for using exactly these narratives about Europe. Drawing upon the theory on two types of political myths, foundational and functional (Della Sala, 2010), these reasons can also be summarised in two groups, depending on whether the narrative’s purpose is to legitimise the existence of the EU or its political action (or inaction, for that matter). A narrative whose goal is the former, answers the question ‘*Why are we a Union?*’, thus legitimising the foundations and basic principles of the EU. A narrative which has the latter

for its aim, gives an answer to the question *‘Why do we do what we do as a Union?’*, hence legitimising the political action, or in other words, the functioning mode of the EU.

All 116 meanings representing nine narratives about Europe were also analysed according to their purpose. A little over 37% of them were evaluated to have been used in a foundational capacity, meaning that their aim was to legitimise the existence of the EU. On the other hand, the majority of meanings, a little less than 63%, were used as functional narratives, legitimising certain political action. Looking at the nine identified narratives about Europe, the position of seven of them in the foundational-functional dichotomy was quite clear: ‘Europe as a peace project’ had a foundational capacity, while ‘Economic Europe’, ‘Social Europe’, ‘Green Europe’, ‘Global Europe’, ‘Democratic Europe’ and ‘Digital Europe’ served as functional narratives. Narratives ‘Europe of common values’ and ‘Stronger together’ seem to have been used in dual capacity. In two-thirds of cases analysed here in this research they acted as foundational narratives, and as functional narratives in the rest.

Graph 5. Foundational and functional narratives about Europe



Source: author

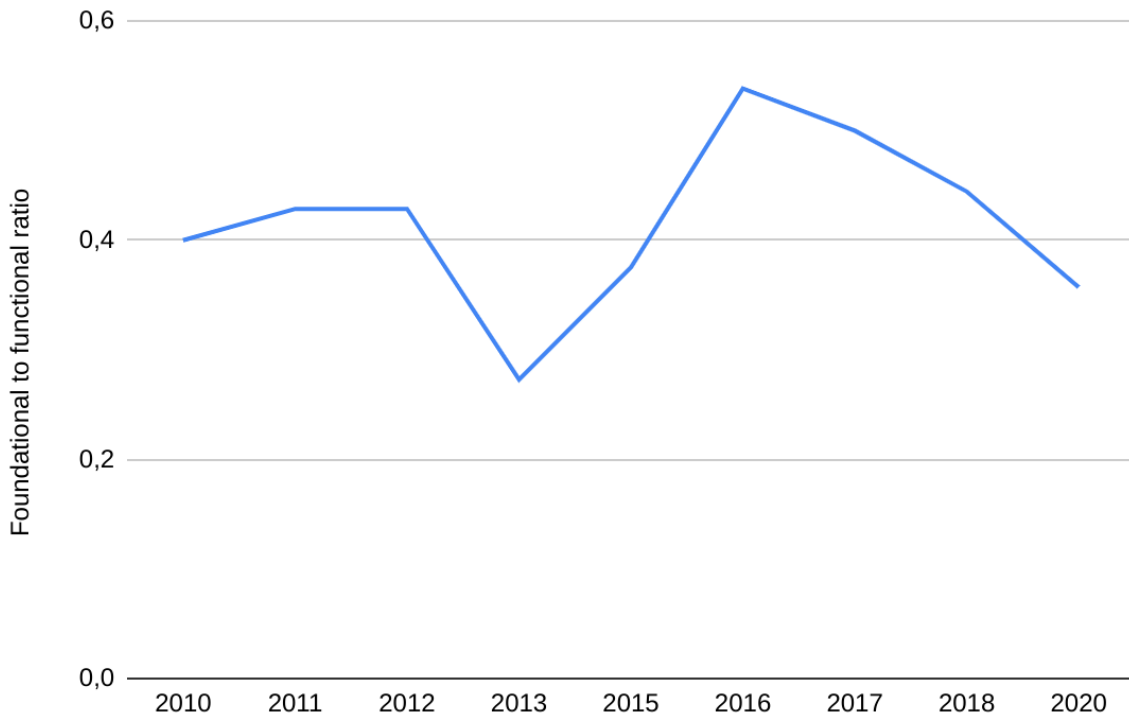
The former was used as a foundational narrative when Commission presidents spoke about common values in general, or about specific values but on a more abstract level, and as a functional narrative when they talked about specific values in terms of suggesting a concrete political action, either by the Commission itself, or in cooperation with the member states. A very similar distinction goes for the ‘Stronger together’ narrative, as well. It was considered as a foundational narrative when Commission presidents stuck to a more generalised idea of being stronger together, and as a functional narrative when specific political actions were part of the narrative.

Although in every speech from 2010 to 2020 the number of functional narratives outnumbered foundational ones, the ratio between the two was relatively volatile, as shown in Graph 6. below, where value 1.0 on the y-axis means that all narratives used were foundational and 0.0 means that all narratives were functional. After dropping down in 2013, the ratio of using foundational to functional narratives peaked in the 2016 State of the Union speech, after which it continuously decreased.

One explanation of this volatility could be the change in perception of how much of a threat different crises were for the existence of the EU. In 2013 Commission President Barroso wanted to portray a positive image of the state of the Union, claiming that “[f]or Europe, recovery is within sight” (Barroso, 2013), so the need for more foundational stories about Europe did not fit in Barroso’s image of Europe at the time. Many members of European Parliament criticised the Commission President exactly on the grounds that “he offered an overly optimistic snapshot of the EU” (Vincenti, 2013). On the other hand, the 2016 State of the Union speech happened just three months after the United Kingdom referendum to leave the European Union. The outcome of the Brexit referendum meant that the EU now had to face, for the first time ever, the prospect of one member state exiting the Union, which surely had to have an impact on Juncker’s speech later that year. That impact was seen in the increased frequency of using narratives about Europe that had the aim to legitimise its existence and its survival in the immediate aftermath of the Brexit referendum.

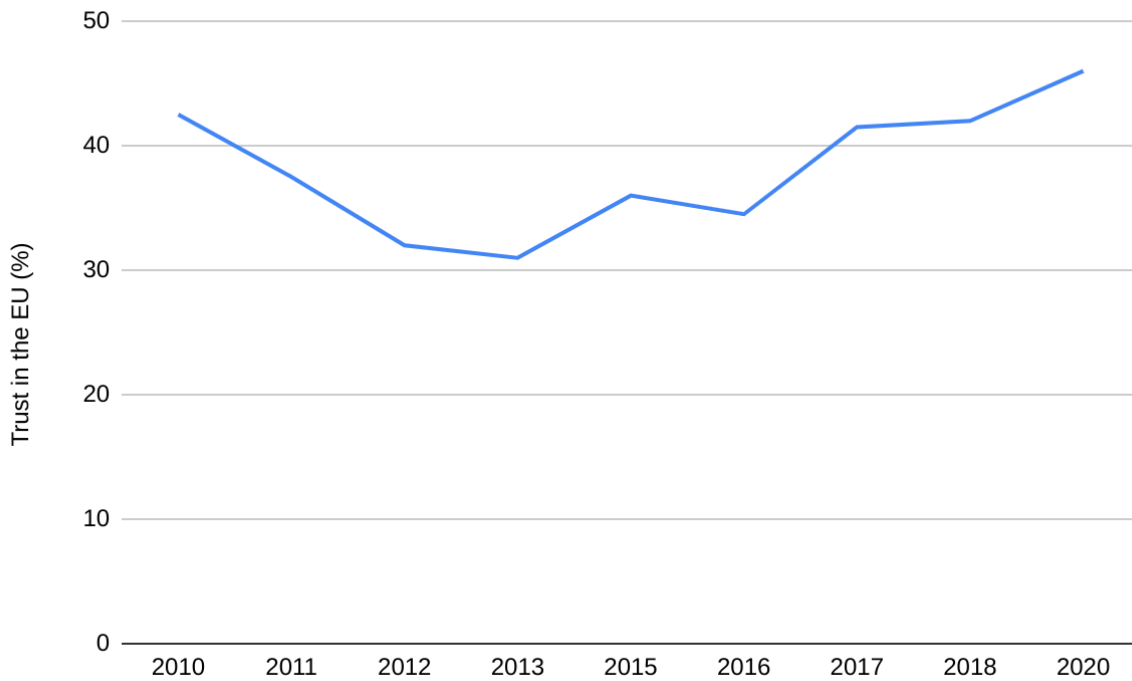
Another explanation could be the change in trust that the European citizens had in the European Union over the years. Eurobarometer measures Europeans’ attitudes towards a variety of issues concerning the EU. Among other things, the trust in the EU is surveyed twice a year in the Standard Eurobarometer report. Data from Eurobarometer in the graph below show the average percentage of Europeans who expressed that they had trust in the EU in that particular year.

Graph 6. Foundational to functional narratives about Europe frequency ratio



Source: author

Graph 7. Trust in the EU (%) from 2010 to 2020



Source: European Commission (2021)

What can be observed from these figures is that during the 2010-2013 period the trust in the EU decreased, then slightly increased in 2015, but dropped again in 2016. Since that year, the percentage of Europeans who trust the EU is steadily rising. Comparing the trendlines that denote the use of foundational narratives (Graph 6.) and the trust in the EU (Graph 7.), it can be seen that the upwards trend in the former is partly mirrored in downwards trend in the latter, at least in the 2010-2012 period, and then again from 2015 to 2020. It can also be seen that Commission President Barroso's 2013 speech indeed was a little too optimistic, as the Eurobarometer data show that the trust in the EU in that year was, actually, the lowest in the 2010-2020 period.

6. Reinvention through narration

This thesis has engaged with identifying narratives about Europe in State of the Union speeches from 2010 to 2020. The research question of how the narratives were used in the speeches was answered indirectly, by detecting what kind of narratives about Europe were used, how frequently and with what purpose. It proved very helpful to combine the deductive approach of detecting six core narratives about Europe presented in the State of the art section with the help of several signifiers, and the inductive approach of repetitive reading of State of the Union speeches in search for additional narratives about Europe. This combined approach made the analysis more valid and comprehensive, because if only a deductive or inductive approach was applied the chances are some of the narratives would be missed.

To summarise the results shown and discussed above, and to answer the research question, nine narratives about Europe were used in State of the Union speeches from 2010 to 2020. Besides the six core narratives ('Europe as a peace project', 'Europe of common values', 'Economic Europe', 'Social Europe', 'Green Europe', 'Global Europe'), three additional narratives were identified ('Stronger together', 'Democratic Europe' and 'Digital Europe'). The most frequent one was 'Europe of common values', followed by 'Social Europe' and 'Global Europe' in joint second and third place, and 'Stronger together' and 'Economic Europe' in joint fourth and fifth place. On the opposite end of the scale, 'Democratic Europe' and 'Digital Europe' share the last place, while 'Europe as a peace project' and 'Green Europe' came second and third to last, respectively. All of them were used for generating support and legitimising either the EU's existence itself or EU's political action.

There were more narratives about Europe identified in the 2016-2020 period than in 2010-2015, which mostly coincides with Commission President Juncker's mandate. This finding and Juncker's role in increased narrative usage are also recognised by Manners (2017), who writes that Juncker's ten political guidelines, which he presented at the beginning of his mandate, "have taken on significant status within EU political and policy agenda, with both symbolic and mythological consequences" (Manners, 2017: 28).

The frequency of each type of narrative shows how some of them have gained ground and some have started to fade out. 'Europe as a peace project' and 'Economic Europe', the main foundational and functional narratives of the early beginnings of European integration, have evidently diminished in presence, making room for narratives about Europe

of a more recent origin, namely the ‘Europe of common values’, ‘Social Europe’ and ‘Global Europe’ narratives.

Apart from changes in frequency, the analysis has also shown how narratives about Europe can be reinterpreted by changing their meaning and purpose. One narrative can be used in various contexts, depending on the most pressing issues at any particular moment, and depending on the speaker’s understanding of the narrative. ‘Europe of common values’ narrative, for example, can be used in one context when emphasising the importance of solidarity and compliance with the fundamental right to asylum, but it can very well be used in the context of advocating a strict approach to border security or, perhaps, in relation to Europe’s Christian heritage. ‘Economic Europe’, to give another example, can be equally convincing when utilised in both times of crises and economic prosperity. If the EU is going through a period of economic crisis, the narrative can be built around the EU’s resilience and capacity to ‘build back better’. Likewise, in times of growth and economic prosperity, the ‘Economic Europe’ narrative can be centred around the economic success, importance of the single market or stability of the common currency. Moreover, as is the case with ‘Europe of common values’ and ‘Stronger together’ narratives, the purpose of some narratives about Europe is subject to change, making them flexible in regard to the foundational or functional legitimisation of their use.

All of the discontinuities described above show the receptiveness of narratives to the outer context. Narratives about Europe have been adjusted to reflect the new reality created by events such as the economic and financial crisis, refugee crisis, Brexit referendum and post-referendum conundrum, COVID-19 pandemic. However, this change could not occur only because of external stimulus of changed context, without previously being conceptualised as an idea and voiced as a part of the State of the Union speech by the three Commission presidents. They were the ‘thinking and speaking’ agents and drivers of discontinuity in the narratives’ frequency, meaning and legitimisation. Using the language of discursive institutionalism (Schmidt, 2020), Commission presidents, acting as sentient agents and prompted by outside occurrences, utilised ideas of Europe’s past, present and future, and sequenced them into nine narratives about Europe, in order to reconceptualise, reinterpret and reframe the European Union.

The variation in frequency of narratives about Europe, the reinterpretation of their meaning and the construction of new narratives are the key elements of reinventing the Union through narration of stories about Europe. Commission presidents act as agents of reinventing the Union. Their ideas and the outer context are the driving factors behind the

changed frequency of utilisation of narratives, their reinterpretation and addition of new narratives. Ultimately, what do the findings in this thesis say about the European Union as a polity? Firstly, its *sui generis* nature slightly fades away as it has been shown that the EU as well relies on narratives that provide legitimation for its existence, political authority and political action. Secondly, the plurality of narratives about Europe shows the diversity and multifacetedness of stories that are used to generate support for the EU. Thirdly, the EU has demonstrated that it is not only a polity which utilises narration as means of drawing legitimation, but that it also has the capacity to reinvent itself through narration and thus regain trust among the members of its political community.

In my final comments, I would like to give a more personal reflection on the process of conceptualising and writing this thesis. From the very beginning my interest was set on State of the Union speeches as an institutional practice that was, in my view, an insufficiently researched territory within the studies on the European Union. However, the exact object of my analysis has changed significantly. From initial thoughts of analysing the mere content of these speeches in terms of words or phrases, I have made a ‘constructivist turn’ and redirected my attention to narratives, which fits into the recent academic trend of “taking ideas and discourse seriously” (Schmidt, 2010). This came as a consequence of taking into consideration the research from other scholars, the essence of State of the Union speeches, and, above all, the complexity of the historical moment in which those speeches happened. The final push, perhaps, came in the middle of reading the 2015 State of the Union speech, in which Commission President Juncker reminded me precisely of that complexity: “This is not the time for ticking off lists or checking whether this or that sectorial initiative has found its way into the State of the Union speech. This is not the time to count how many times the word social, economic or sustainable appears in the State of the Union speech. Instead, it is time for honesty” (Juncker, 2015). Finally, the most valuable lesson that I have learnt is how to approach research like this, and that is with an open mind, a sufficient dose of pragmatism and a certain degree of flexibility.

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Appendix 1.

*Commission president (BAR - José Manuel Barroso; JUN - Jean-Claude Juncker; VDL - Ursula von der Leyen)

**Year

| Meaning | CP* | Y** | Narrative | Legitimation |
|--|-----|------|-------------------------|--------------|
| <i>We have the people, we have the companies. What they both need is an open and modern single market. The internal market is Europe's greatest asset, and we are not using it enough. We need to deepen it urgently.</i> | BAR | 2010 | Economic Europe | functional |
| <i>Over the last year, the economic and financial crisis has put our Union before one of its greatest challenge ever. Our interdependence was highlighted and our solidarity was tested like never before. As I look back at how we have reacted, I believe that we have withstood the test. We have provided many of the answers needed – on financial assistance to Member States facing exceptional circumstances, on economic governance, on financial regulation, on growth and jobs. And we have been able to build a base camp from which to modernise our economies. Europe has shown it will stand up and be counted. Those who predicted the demise of the European Union were proved wrong. The European institutions and the Member States have demonstrated leadership. My message to each and every European is that you can trust the European Union to do what it takes to secure your future. The economic outlook in the European Union today is better than one year ago, not least as a result of our determined action. The recovery is gathering pace, albeit unevenly within the Union. Growth this year will be higher than initially forecast. The unemployment rate, whilst still much too high, has stopped increasing. Clearly, uncertainties and risks remain, not least outside the European Union. We should be under no illusions. Our work is far from finished. There is no room for complacency. Budgetary expansion played its role to counter the decline in economic activity. But it is now time to exit. Without structural reforms, we will not create sustainable growth. We must use the next 12 months to accelerate our reform agenda. Now is the time to modernise our social market economy so that it can compete globally and respond to the challenge of demography. Now is the time to make the right investments for our future.</i> | BAR | 2010 | Economic Europe | functional |
| <i>Everything we do is for the citizens of Europe. A fundamental dimension of our European project is precisely building an area of freedom, security and justice. We are working hard to implement the Stockholm action plan. We will make a real push on asylum and migration. Legal migrants will find in Europe a place where human values are respected and enforced. At the same time, we will crack down on the exploitation of illegal immigrants within Europe and at our borders. The Commission will make new proposals on policing our external borders. And we will bring forward an internal security strategy to tackle threats of organised</i> | BAR | 2010 | Europe of common values | functional |

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|---|-----|------|-------------------|--------------|
| <i>crime and terrorism. Europeans will find that their fundamental rights and obligations exist wherever they go. Everyone in Europe must respect the law, and the governments must respect human rights, including those of minorities. Racism and xenophobia have no place in Europe. On such sensitive issues, when a problem arises, we must all act with responsibility. I make a strong appeal not to re-awaken the ghosts of Europe's past. An area of freedom, liberty and security, will create a place where Europeans can prosper.</i> | | | | |
| <i>Being a global player also means standing up for our values. Human rights are not negotiable. I am shocked about how the rights of women are being infringed in many countries. I am appalled when I hear that Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani is sentenced to death by stoning. This is barbaric beyond words. In Europe we condemn such acts which have no justification under any moral or religious code.</i> | BAR | 2010 | Global Europe | functional |
| <i>The final challenge I want to address today is how we pull our weight on the global stage. When we deal with our every day problems, we sometimes lose perspective and forget our achievements. A peaceful and successful transition to a European Union that has doubled in size and is negotiating further accessions. A sound currency, the euro, that is a major currency of the world. A strong partnership with our neighbourhood that strengthens us all. If we act decisively, then we have nothing to fear from the 21st century. As the strategic partnerships of the 21st century emerge, Europe should seize the chance to define its future. I am impatient to see the Union play the role in global affairs that matches its economic weight. Our partners are watching and are expecting us to engage as Europe, not just as 27 individual countries. If we don't act together, Europe will not be a force in the world, and they will move on without us: without the European Union but also without its Member States. This is why, in my political guidelines, I called for Europe to be a global player, a global leader – a key task and test for our generation.</i> | BAR | 2010 | Global Europe | functional |
| <i>This is Europe's moment of truth. Europe must show it is more than 27 different national solutions. We either swim together, or sink separately. We will only succeed if, whether acting nationally, regionally or locally we think European.</i> | BAR | 2010 | Stronger together | foundational |
| <i>The secret of Europe's success is its unique Community model. More than ever, the Commission must drive the political agenda with its vision and proposals. I have called for a special relationship between the Commission and Parliament, the two Community institutions par excellence. I am intensifying my political cooperation with you. Europe is not only Brussels or Strasbourg. It is our regions. It is the cities, towns and villages you come from. When you walk round your constituencies, you can point to the European projects that are so important for their prosperity. At the end of the day, we are all in the same boat, the European institutions, the Member states, the regions. The Union will not achieve its objectives in Europe without the Member States. And the Member States will not achieve their objectives in the world without the European Union.</i> | BAR | 2010 | Stronger together | foundational |

| | | | | |
|---|-----|------|---------------------------|--------------|
| <p><i>The roots of the crisis are well-known. Europe has not met the challenges of competitiveness. Some of our Member States have lived beyond their means. Some behaviours in the financial markets have been irresponsible and inadmissible. We have allowed imbalances between our Member States to grow, particularly in the euro area. Tectonic shifts in the world order and the pressures of globalisation, have made matters even worse. The result is clear: concern in our societies. Fear among our citizens for the future. A growing danger of a retreat into national, not to say nationalist, feeling. Populist responses are calling into question the major successes of the European Union: the euro, the single market, even the free movement of persons. Today we can say that the sovereign debt crisis today is, above all, a crisis of political confidence. And our citizens, but also people in the outside world, are observing us and wondering – are we really a Union? Do we really have the will to sustain the single currency? Are the most vulnerable Member States really determined to carry out essential reforms? Are the most prosperous Member States really ready to show solidarity? Is Europe really capable of achieving growth and creating jobs? I assert here today: Yes, the situation is serious. But there are solutions to the crisis. Europe has a future, if we restore confidence. And to restore confidence we need stability and growth. But also political will, political leadership. Together we must propose to our citizens a European renewal. We must translate into deeds what was stated in the Berlin Declaration, signed by the Commission, by Parliament and by the European Council on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the signature of the Rome Treaties. It was said then: ‘Wir leben heute miteinander, wie es nie zuvor möglich war. Wir Bürgerinnen und Bürger der Europäischen Union sind zu unserem Glück vereint.’ - ‘Today we live together as was never possible before. We, the citizens of the European Union, have united for the better.’ It is a declaration. And words count. This expression of will must be translated into everyday courage.</i></p> | BAR | 2011 | Economic Europe | functional |
| <p><i>Stability and responsibility are not enough on their own. We need stability but we also need growth. We need responsibility but we also need solidarity. The economy can only remain strong if it delivers growth and jobs. That's why we must unleash the energy of our economy, especially the real economy. The forecasts today point to a strong slowdown. But significant growth in Europe is not an impossible dream. It will not come magically tomorrow. But we can create the conditions for growth to resume. We have done it before. We must and we can do it again.</i></p> | BAR | 2011 | Economic Europe | functional |
| <p><i>At the end of our mandate, in 2014, it will be exactly a century since the Great War broke out on our continent. A dark period which was followed by the Second World War, one of the most dramatic pages in the history of Europe and the world. Today such horrors are unimaginable in Europe, largely because we have the European Union. Thanks to the European vision, we have built a guarantee of peace in our continent through economic and political integration. That is why we cannot allow this great work to be placed in jeopardy. It was a gift from previous generations. It will not be our generation that calls it into question. And let us be clear: if we start to break up Europe, if we start to backtrack on Europe's major achievements, we will doubtless have to face the risk of fragmentation.</i></p> | BAR | 2011 | Europe as a peace project | foundational |
| <p><i>We should remember that our Europe is a Europe of citizens. As citizens, we all gain through Europe. We gain a European identity and citizenship apart from our national citizenship. European citizenship adds a set of rights and opportunities. The opportunity to freely cross borders, to study and work abroad. Here again, we must all stand up and preserve and develop these rights and</i></p> | BAR | 2011 | Europe of common values | foundational |

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| <i>opportunities. Just as the Commission is doing now with our proposals on Schengen. We will not tolerate a rolling back of our citizens' rights. We will defend the freedom of circulation and all the freedoms in our Union.</i> | | | | |
| <i>I feel hurt when I hear people in other parts of the world, with a certain condescension, telling us Europeans what we should do. I think, frankly, we have problems, very serious problems, but I also think we do not have to apologise for our democracies. We do not have to apologise for our social market economy. We should ask our institutions, but also our Member States, Paris, Berlin, Athens, Lisbon and Dublin, to show a burst of pride in being European, a burst of dignity, and say to our partners: 'Thanks for the advice, but we can overcome this crisis together'. I feel that pride in being European. And pride in being European is not just about our great culture, our great civilisation, everything to which we have given birth. It is not pride only in the past, it is pride in our future. That is the confidence that we have to re-create among ourselves. It is possible.</i> | BAR | 2011 | Europe of common values | foundational |
| <i>European action in the world is not only the best guarantee for our citizens and for the defence of our interests and our values: it is also indispensable to the world. Today it is fashionable to talk of a G2. I believe the world does not want a G2. It is not in the interests of the Two themselves. We know the tension that bipolarity created during the Cold War. If we want to have a just world and an open world, I believe that Europe is more necessary than ever. The rapidly-changing world needs a Europe that assumes its responsibilities. An influential Europe, a Europe of 27 - with the accession of Croatia soon to be 28. A Europe that continues to show the way, whether in matters of trade or of climate change. At a time when major events await us, from Durban to Rio +20, Europe must retain its position of leadership on these questions.</i> | BAR | 2011 | Global Europe | functional |
| <i>Fifty years ago, 12 countries in Europe came together to sign the Social Charter. It was exactly in October 50 years ago. Today, that Charter has 47 signatories, including all our Member States. To guarantee these fundamental values in Europe, I believe we need to boost the quality of social dialogue at European level. The renewal of Europe can only succeed with the input and the ownership of all the social partners – of trade unions, of workers, of businesses, civil society in general.</i> | BAR | 2011 | Social Europe | functional |
| <i>Reforms to our labour markets, public finances and pension systems require a major effort from all parts of society. We all know these changes are necessary, so that we can reform our social market economy and keep our social model. But it is imperative that we hold on to our values – values of fairness, of inclusiveness and of solidarity.</i> | BAR | 2011 | Social Europe | functional |
| <i>The time for piecemeal solutions is over. We need to set our minds on global solutions. A greater ambition for Europe. Today we are at a turning point in our history. A moments when, if we do not integrate further, we risk fragmentation. It is therefore a question of political will, a test for our whole generation. And I say to you, yes, it is possible to emerge from this crisis. It is not only possible, but it is necessary. And political leadership is about making possible that which is necessary.</i> | BAR | 2011 | Stronger together | functional |
| <i>In the last three years, Member States - I should say taxpayers - have granted aid and provided guarantees of € 4.6 trillion to the financial sector. It is time for the financial sector to make a contribution back to society. That is why I am very proud to say that today, the Commission adopted a proposal for the Financial Transaction Tax. Today I am putting before you a very important text that if implemented may generate a revenue of about € 55 billion per year. Some people will ask "Why?". Why? It is a question of</i> | BAR | 2011 | Social Europe | functional |

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| <p><i>fairness. If our farmers, if our workers, if all the sectors of the economy from industry to agriculture to services, if they all pay a contribution to the society also the banking sector should make a contribution to the society. And if we need – because we need – fiscal consolidation, if we need more revenues the question is where these revenues are coming from. Are we going to tax labour more? Are we going to tax consumption more? I think it is fair to tax financial activities that in some of our Member States do not pay the proportionate contribution to the society.</i></p> | | | | |
| <p><i>In the 20th century, a country of just 10 or 15 million people could be a global power. In the 21st-century, even the biggest European countries run the risk of irrelevance in between the global giants like the US or China. History is accelerating. It took 155 years for Britain to double its GDP per capita, 50 years for the US, and just 15 years for China. But if you look at some of our new Member States, the economic transformation going on is no less impressive. Europe has all the assets it takes. In fact much more so than previous generations faced with similar or even greater challenges. But we need to act accordingly and mobilize all these resources together. It is time to match ambitions, decisions, and actions. It is time to put a stop to piecemeal responses and muddling through. It is time to learn the lessons from history and write a better future for our Europe.</i></p> | BAR | 2012 | Economic Europe | functional |
| <p><i>In the face of the crisis, important decisions have been taken. Across the European Union, reform and consolidation measures are being implemented. Joint financial backstops are being put in place, and the European institutions have consistently shown that they stands by the Euro. The Commission is very aware that in the Member States implementing the most intense reforms, there is hardship and there are – sometimes very painful – difficult adjustments. But it is only through these reforms that we can come to a better future. They were long overdue. Going back to the status quo ante is simply impossible. The Commission will continue to do all it can to support these Member States and to help them boost growth and employment, for instance through the re-programming of structural funds.</i></p> | BAR | 2012 | Economic Europe | functional |
| <p><i>A political union also means that we must strengthen the foundations on which our Union is built: the respect for our fundamental values, for the rule of law and democracy. In recent months we have seen threats to the legal and democratic fabric in some of our European states. The European Parliament and the Commission were the first to raise the alarm and played the decisive role in seeing these worrying developments brought into check. But these situations also revealed limits of our institutional arrangements. We need a better developed set of instruments– not just the alternative between the "soft power" of political persuasion and the "nuclear option" of article 7 of the Treaty.</i></p> | BAR | 2012 | Europe of common values | foundational |
| <p><i>We should be proud to be Europeans. Proud of our rich and diverse culture. In spite of our current problems, our societies are among the most human and free in the world. We do not have to apologise for our democracy our social market economy and for our values. With high levels of social cohesion. Respect for human rights and human dignity. Equality between men and women and respect for our environment. These European societies, with all its problems, are among the most decent societies in human history and I think we should be proud of that. In our countries two or three girls do not go to prison because they sing and criticise the ruler of their country. In our countries people are free and are proud of that freedom and people understand what it means to have that freedom. In many of our countries, namely the most recent Member States, there is a recent memory of what</i></p> | BAR | 2012 | Europe of common values | foundational |

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| <p><i>was dictatorship and totalitarianism. So Previous generations have overcome bigger challenges. Now it is for this generation to show they are up to the task. Now is the moment for all pro-Europeans to leave business as usual behind and to embrace the business of the future. The European Union was built to guarantee peace. Today, this means making our Union fit to meet the challenges of globalization. That is why we need a new thinking for Europe, a decisive deal for Europe. That is why we need to guide ourselves by the values that are at the heart of the European Union. Europe I believe has a soul. This soul can give us the strength and the determination to do what we must do.</i></p> | | | | |
| <p><i>The appalling situation in Syria reminds us that we can not afford to be by-standers. A new and democratic Syria must emerge. We have a joint responsibility to make this happen. And to work with those in the global order who need to give also their co operation to this goal. The world needs an EU that keeps its leadership at the forefront of development and humanitarian assistance. That stands by open economies and fights protectionism. That leads the fight against climate change. The world needs a Europe that is capable of deploying military missions to help stabilize the situation in crisis areas. We need to launch a comprehensive review of European capabilities and begin truly collective defense planning. Yes, we need to reinforce our Common Foreign and Security Policy and a common approach to defense matters because together we have the power, and the scale to shape the world into a fairer, rules based and human rights' abiding place.</i></p> | BAR | 2012 | Global Europe | functional |
| <p><i>A political union also means doing more to fulfil our global role. Sharing sovereignty in Europe means being more sovereign in a global world. In today's world, size matters. And values make the difference. That is why Europe's message must be one of freedom, democracy, of rule of law and of solidarity. In short, our values European values. More than ever our citizens and the new world order need an active and influential Europe. This is not just for us, for the rest of the world it is important that we succeed. A Europe that stands by its values. And a Europe that stands up for its belief that human rights are not a luxury for the developed world, they should be seen as universal values</i></p> | BAR | 2012 | Global Europe | functional |
| <p><i>Our agenda of structural reform requires a major adjustment effort. It will only work if it is fair and equitable. Because inequality is not sustainable. In some parts of Europe we are seeing a real social emergency. Rising poverty and massive levels of unemployment, especially among our young people. That is why we must strengthen social cohesion. It is a feature that distinguishes European society from alternative models. Some say that, because of the crisis, the European Social model is dead. I do not agree. Yes, we need to reform our economies and modernise our social protection systems. But an effective social protection system that helps those in need is not an obstacle to prosperity. It is indeed an indispensable element of it. Indeed, it is precisely those European countries with the most effective social protection systems and with the most developed social partnerships, that are among the most successful and competitive economies in the world.</i></p> | BAR | 2012 | Social Europe | functional |

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| <p><i>Over the last four years, we have made many bold decisions to tackle this systemic crisis. But despite all these efforts, our responses have not yet convinced citizens, markets or our international partners. Why? Because time and again, we have allowed doubts to spread. Doubts over whether some countries are really ready to reform and regain competitiveness. Doubts over whether other countries are really willing to stand by each other so that the Euro and the European project are irreversible. On too many occasions, we have seen a vicious spiral. First, very important decisions for our future are taken at European summits. But then, the next day, we see some of those very same people who took those decisions undermining them. Saying that either they go too far, or that they don't go far enough. And then we get a problem of credibility. A problem of confidence. It is not acceptable to present these European meetings as if they were boxing events, claiming a knockout victory over a rival. We cannot belong to the same Union and behave as if we don't. We cannot put at risk nine good decisions with one action or statement that raises doubts about all we have achieved. This, Honourable Members, reveals the essence of Europe's political crisis of confidence. If Europe's political actors do not abide by the rules and the decisions they have set themselves, how can they possibly convince others that they are determined to solve this crisis together?</i></p> | BAR | 2012 | Stronger together | functional |
| <p><i>Since the start of the crisis, we have seen time and again that interconnected global markets are quicker and therefore more powerful than fragmented national political systems. This undermines the trust of citizens in political decision making. And it is fuelling populism and extremism in Europe and elsewhere. The reality is that in an interconnected world, Europe's Member States on their own are no longer able to effectively steer the course of events. But at the same time, they have not yet equipped their Union - our Union —with the instruments needed to cope with this new reality. We are now in a transition, in a defining moment. This moment requires decisions and leadership. Yes, globalisation demands more European unity. More unity demands more integration. More integration demands more democracy, European democracy. In Europe, this means first and foremost accepting that we are all in the same boat. It means recognising the commonality of our European interests. It means embracing the interdependence of our destinies. And it means demanding a true sense of common responsibility and solidarity. Because when you are on a boat in the middle of the storm, absolute loyalty is the minimum you demand from your fellow crew members. This is the only way we will keep up with the pace of change. It is the only way we will get the scale and efficiency we need to be a global player. It is the only way to safeguard our values, because it is also a matter of values, in a changing world.</i></p> | BAR | 2012 | Stronger together | functional |
| <p><i>In our countries people are free and are proud of that freedom and people understand what it means to have that freedom. In many of our countries, namely the most recent Member States, there is a recent memory of what was dictatorship and totalitarianism. So Previous generations have overcome bigger challenges. Now it is for this generation to show they are up to the task. Now is the moment for all pro-Europeans to leave business as usual behind and to embrace the business of the future.</i></p> | BAR | 2012 | Europe of common values | foundational |
| <p><i>And does everyone still remember just how much Europe has suffered from its wars during the last century, and how European integration was the valid answer? Next year, it will be one century after the start of the First World War. A war that tore Europe apart, from Sarajevo to the Somme. We must never take peace for granted. We need to recall that it is because of Europe that former enemies now sit around the same table and work together. It is only because they were offered a European perspective that</i></p> | BAR | 2013 | Europe as a peace project | foundational |

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| <p><i>now even Serbia and Kosovo come to an agreement, under mediation of the EU. Last year's Nobel Peace Prize reminded us of that historic achievement: that Europe is a project of peace. We should be more aware of it ourselves. Sometimes I think we should not be ashamed to be proud. Not arrogant. But more proud. We should look towards the future, but with a wisdom we gained from the past. Let me say this to all those who rejoice in Europe's difficulties and who want to roll back our integration and go back to isolation: the pre-integrated Europe of the divisions, the war, the trenches, is not what people desire and deserve. The European continent has never in its history known such a long period of peace as since the creation of the European Community. It is our duty to preserve it and deepen it.</i></p> | | | | |
| <p><i>It is precisely with our values that we address the unbearable situation in Syria, which has tested, over the last months, the world's conscience so severely. The European Union has led the international aid response by mobilising close to 1.5 billion euros, of which €850 million comes directly from the EU budget. The Commission will do its utmost to help the Syrian people and refugees in neighbouring countries. We have recently witnessed events we thought had long been eradicated. The use of chemical weapons is a horrendous act that deserves a clear condemnation and a strong answer. The international community, with the UN at its centre, carries a collective responsibility to sanction these acts and to put an end to this conflict. The proposal to put Syria's chemical weapons beyond use is potentially a positive development. The Syrian regime must now demonstrate that it will implement this without any delay. In Europe, we believe that, ultimately, only a political solution stands a chance of delivering the lasting peace that the Syrian people deserve.</i></p> | BAR | 2013 | Global Europe | functional |
| <p><i>Does everyone still realise how enlargement has been a success in terms of healing history's deep scars, establishing democracies where no one had thought it possible? How neighbourhood policy was and still is the best way to provide security and prosperity in regions of vital importance for Europe? Where would we be without all of this? Today, countries like Ukraine are more than ever seeking closer ties to the European Union, attracted by our economic and social model. We cannot turn our back on them. We cannot accept any attempts to limit these countries own sovereign choices. Free will and free consent need to be respected.</i></p> | BAR | 2013 | Global Europe | functional |
| <p><i>It is only natural that, over the last few years, our efforts to overcome the economic crisis have overshadowed everything else. But our idea of Europe needs to go far beyond the economy. We are much more than a market. The European ideal touches the very foundations of European society. It is about values, and I underline this word: values. It is based on a firm belief in political, social and economic standards, grounded in our social market economy. In today's world, the EU level is indispensable to protect these values and standards and promote citizens' rights: from consumer protection to labour rights, from women's rights to respect for minorities, from environmental standards to data protection and privacy.</i></p> | BAR | 2013 | Europe of common values | foundational |
| <p><i>Safeguarding its values, such as the rule of law, is what the European Union was made to do, from its inception to the latest chapters in enlargement. In last year's State of the Union speech, at a moment of challenges to the rule of law in our own member states, I addressed the need to make a bridge between political persuasion and targeted infringement procedures on the one hand, and what I call the nuclear option of Article 7 of the Treaty, namely suspension of a member states' rights. Experience has confirmed the usefulness of the Commission role as an independent and objective referee. We should consolidate this experience</i></p> | BAR | 2013 | Europe of common values | functional |

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| <i>through a more general framework. It should be based on the principle of equality between member states, activated only in situations where there is a serious, systemic risk to the rule of law, and triggered by pre-defined benchmarks. The Commission will come forward with a communication on this. I believe it is a debate that is key to our idea of Europe. This does not mean that national sovereignty or democracy are constrained. But we do need a robust European mechanism to influence the equation when basic common principles are at stake. There are certain non-negotiable values that the EU and its member states must and shall always defend.</i> | | | | |
| <i>I still vividly remember my meeting last year with chief economists of many of our leading banks. Most of them were expecting Greece to leave the euro. All of them feared the disintegration of the euro area. Now, we can give a clear reply to those fears: no one has left or has been forced to leave the euro. This year, the European Union enlarged from 27 to 28 member states. Next year the euro area will grow from 17 to 18. What matters now is what we make of this progress. Do we talk it up, or talk it down? Do we draw confidence from it to pursue what we have started, or do we belittle the results of our efforts?</i> | BAR | 2013 | Economic Europe | functional |
| <i>Economically, Europe has always been a way to close gaps between countries, regions and people. And that must remain so. We cannot do member states' work for them. The responsibility remains theirs. But we can and must complement it with European responsibility and European solidarity. For that reason, strengthening the social dimension is a priority for the months to come, together with our social partners. The Commission will come with its communication on the social dimension of the economic and monetary union on the 2nd of October. Solidarity is a key element of what being part of Europe is all about, and something to take pride in.</i> | BAR | 2013 | Social Europe | functional |
| <i>And whilst fighting climate change, our 20-20-20 goals have set our economy on the path to green growth and resource efficiency, reducing costs and creating jobs. By the end of this year, we will come out with concrete proposals for our energy and climate framework up to 2030. And we will continue to shape the international agenda by fleshing out a comprehensive, legally binding global climate agreement by 2015, with our partners. Europe alone cannot do all the fight for climate change. Frankly, we need the others also on board.</i> | BAR | 2013 | Green Europe | functional |
| <i>For Europe, recovery is within sight. Of course, we need to be vigilant. 'One swallow does not make a summer, nor one fine day'. Let us be realistic in the analysis. Let us not overestimate, but let's also not underestimate what has been done. Even one fine quarter doesn't mean we are out of the economic heavy weather. But it does prove we are on the right track. On the basis of the figures and evolutions as we now see them, we have good reason to be confident. This should push us to keep up our efforts. We owe it to those for whom the recovery is not yet within reach, to those who do not yet profit from positive developments. We owe it to our 26 million unemployed. Especially to the young people who are looking to us to give them hope. Hope and confidence are also part of the economic equation.</i> | BAR | 2013 | Economic Europe | functional |

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| <p><i>As we speak, exactly 5 years ago, the United States government took over Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, bailed out AIG, and Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy protection. These events triggered the global financial crisis. It evolved into an unprecedented economic crisis. And it became a social crisis with dramatic consequences for many of our citizens. These events have aggravated the debt problem that still distresses our governments. They have led to an alarming increase in unemployment, especially amongst young people. And they are still holding back our households and our companies. But Europe has fought back. In those 5 years, we have given a determined response. We suffered the crisis together. We realised we had to fight it together. And we did, and we are doing it. If we look back and think about what we have done together to unite Europe throughout the crisis, I think it is fair to say that we would never have thought all of this possible 5 years ago.</i></p> | BAR | 2013 | Economic Europe | functional |
| <p><i>Surely, you all know Justus Lipsius. Justus Lipsius is the name of the Council building in Brussels. Justus Lipsius was a very influential 16th century humanist scholar, who wrote a very important book called De Constantia. He wrote, 'Constancy is a right and immovable strength of the mind, neither lifted up nor pressed down with external or casual accidents.' Only a 'strength of the mind', he argued, based on 'judgment and sound reason', can help you through confusing and alarming times. I hope that in these times, these difficult times, all of us, including the governments' representatives that meet at the Justus Lipsius building, show that determination, that perseverance, when it comes to the implementation of the decisions taken. Because one of the issues that we have is to be coherent, not just take decisions, but afterwards be able to implement them on the ground.</i></p> | BAR | 2013 | Europe of common values | functional |
| <p><i>I just came back from the G20 in Saint Petersburg. I can tell you: this year, contrary to recent years, we Europeans did not receive any lessons from other parts of the world on how to address the crisis. We received appreciation and encouragement. Not because the crisis is over, because it is not over. The resilience of our Union will continue to be tested. But what we are doing creates the confidence that we are overcoming the crisis – provided we are not complacent. We are tackling our challenges together. We have to tackle them together. In our world of geo-economic and geopolitical tectonic changes, I believe that only together, as the European Union, we can give our citizens what they aspire: that our values, our interests, our prosperity are protected and promoted in the age of globalisation. So now is the time to rise above purely national issues and parochial interests and to have real progress for Europe. To bring a truly European perspective to the debate with national constituencies. Now is the time for all those who care about Europe, whatever their political or ideological position, wherever they come from, to speak up for Europe. If we ourselves don't do it, we cannot expect others to do it either.</i></p> | BAR | 2013 | Stronger together | functional |
| <p><i>Whether defending our interests in international trade, securing our energy provision, or restoring people's sense of fairness by fighting tax fraud and tax evasion: only by acting as a Union do we pull our weight at the world stage. Whether seeking impact for the development and humanitarian aid we give to developing countries, managing our common external borders or seeking to develop in Europe a strong security and defense policy: only by integrating more can we really reach our objectives. There is no doubt about it. Our internal coherence and international relevance are inextricably linked. Our economic attraction and political traction are fundamentally entwined.</i></p> | BAR | 2013 | Stronger together | foundational |

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| <p><i>The polarisation that resulted from the crisis poses a risk to us all, to the project, to the European project. We, legitimate political representatives of the European Union, can turn the tide. You, the democratic representatives of Europe, directly elected, will be at the forefront of the political debate. The question I want to pose is: which picture of Europe will voters be presented with? The candid version, or the cartoon version? The myths or the facts? The honest, reasonable version, or the extremist, populist version? It's an important difference. I know some people out there will say Europe is to blame for the crisis and the hardship. But we can remind people that Europe was not at the origin of this crisis. It resulted from mismanagement of public finances by national governments and irresponsible behaviour in financial markets. We can explain how Europe has worked to fix the crisis. What we would have lost if we hadn't succeeded in upholding the single market, because it was under threat, and the common currency, because some people predicted the end of the euro. If we hadn't coordinated recovery efforts and employment initiatives. Some people will say that Europe is forcing governments to cut spending. But we can remind voters that government debt got way out of hand even before the crisis, not because of but despite Europe. We can add that the most vulnerable in our societies, and our children, would end up paying the price if we don't persevere now. And the truth is that countries inside the euro or outside the euro, in Europe or outside Europe, they are making efforts to curb their very burdened public finances. Some will campaign saying that we have given too much money to vulnerable countries. Others will say we have given too little money to vulnerable countries. But every one of us can explain what we did and why: there is a direct link between one country's loans and another country's banks, between one country's investments and another country's businesses, between one country's workers and another country's companies. This kind of interdependence means only European solutions work. What I tell people is: when you are in the same boat, one cannot say: 'your end of the boat is sinking.' We were in the same boat when things went well, and we are in it together when things are difficult. Some people might campaign saying: Europe has grabbed too much power. Others will claim Europe always does too little, too late. The interesting things is that sometimes we have the same people saying that Europe is not doing enough and at the same time that's not giving more means to Europe to do what Europe has to do. But we can explain that member states have entrusted Europe with tasks and competences. The European Union is not a foreign power. It is the result of democratic decisions by the European institutions and by member states.</i></p> | BAR | 2013 | Democratic Europe | functional |
| <p><i>Since the beginning of the year, nearly 500,000 people have made their way to Europe. The vast majority of them are fleeing from war in Syria, the terror of the Islamic State in Libya or dictatorship in Eritrea. The most affected Member States are Greece, with over 213,000 refugees, Hungary, with over 145,000, and Italy, with over 115,000. The numbers are impressive. For some they are frightening. But now is not the time to take fright. It is time for bold, determined and concerted action by the European Union, by its institutions and by all its Member States. This is first of all a matter of humanity and of human dignity. And for Europe it is also a matter of historical fairness. We Europeans should remember well that Europe is a continent where nearly everyone has at one time been a refugee. Our common history is marked by millions of Europeans fleeing from religious or political persecution, from war, dictatorship, or oppression. Huguenots fleeing from France in the 17th century. Jews, Sinti, Roma and many others fleeing from Germany during the Nazi horror of the 1930s and 1940s. Spanish republicans fleeing to refugee camps in southern France at the end of the 1930s after their defeat in the Civil War. Hungarian revolutionaries fleeing to Austria after their uprising against</i></p> | JUN | 2015 | Europe of common values | functional |

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| <p><i>communist rule was oppressed by Soviet tanks in 1956. Czech and Slovak citizens seeking exile in other European countries after the oppression of the Prague Spring in 1968. Hundreds and thousands were forced to flee from their homes after the Yugoslav wars. Have we forgotten that there is a reason there are more McDonalds living in the U.S. than there are in Scotland? That there is a reason the number of O'Neills and Murphys in the U.S. exceeds by far those living in Ireland? Have we forgotten that 20 million people of Polish ancestry live outside Poland, as a result of political and economic emigration after the many border shifts, forced expulsions and resettlements during Poland's often painful history? Have we really forgotten that after the devastation of the Second World War, 60 million people were refugees in Europe? That as a result of this terrible European experience, a global protection regime – the 1951 Geneva Convention on the status of refugees – was established to grant refuge to those who jumped the walls in Europe to escape from war and totalitarian oppression? We Europeans should know and should never forget why giving refuge and complying with the fundamental right to asylum is so important.</i></p> | | | | |
| <p><i>I have said in the past that we are too seldom proud of our European heritage and our European project. Yet, in spite of our fragility, our self-perceived weaknesses, today it is Europe that is sought as a place of refuge and exile. It is Europe today that represents a beacon of hope, a haven of stability in the eyes of women and men in the Middle East and in Africa. That is something to be proud of and not something to fear. Europe today, in spite of many differences amongst its Member States, is by far the wealthiest and most stable continent in the world.</i></p> | JUN | 2015 | Europe of common values | foundational |
| <p><i>I do not want to create any illusions that the refugee crisis will be over any time soon. It will not. But pushing back boats from piers, setting fire to refugee camps, or turning a blind eye to poor and helpless people: that is not Europe. Europe is the baker in Kos who gives away his bread to hungry and weary souls. Europe is the students in Munich and in Passau who bring clothes for the new arrivals at the train station. Europe is the policeman in Austria who welcomes exhausted refugees upon crossing the border. This is the Europe I want to live in. The crisis is stark and the journey is still long. I am counting on you, in this House, and on all Member States to show European courage going forward, in line with our common values and our history.</i></p> | JUN | 2015 | Europe of common values | functional |
| <p><i>All my life, I have believed in Europe. I have my reasons, many of which I know and am relieved are not relatable to generations today. Upon taking office, I said I want to rebuild bridges that had started to crumble. Where solidarity had started to fray at the seams. Where old daemons sought to resurface. We still have a long way to go. But when, generations from now, people read about this moment in Europe's history books, let it read that we stood together in demonstrating compassion and opened our homes to those in need of our protection. That we joined forces in addressing global challenges, protecting our values and resolving conflicts. That we made sure taxpayers never again have to pay for the greed of financial speculators. That hand in hand we secured growth and prosperity for our economies, for our businesses, and above all for our children. Let it read that we forged a Union stronger than ever before. Let it read that together we made European history. A story our grandchildren will tell with pride.</i></p> | JUN | 2015 | Stronger together | foundational |
| <p><i>Across Europe we now have common standards for the way we receive asylum seekers, in respect of their dignity, for the way we process their asylum applications, and we have common criteria which our independent justice systems use to determine whether someone is entitled to international protection. But these standards need to be implemented and respected in practice. And this is</i></p> | JUN | 2015 | Europe of common values | functional |

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| <p><i>clearly not yet the case, we can see this every day on television. Before the summer, the Commission had to start a first series of 32 infringement proceedings to remind Member States of what they had previously agreed to do. And a second series will follow in the days to come. European laws must be applied by all Member States – this must be self-evident in a Union based on the rule of law.</i></p> | | | | |
| <p><i>The British are asking fundamental questions to and of the EU. Whether the EU delivers prosperity for its citizens. Whether the action of the EU concentrates on areas where it can deliver results. Whether the EU is open to the rest of the world. These are questions to which the EU has answers, and not just for the sake of the UK. All 28 EU Member States want the EU to be modern and focused for the benefit of all its citizens. We all agree that the EU must adapt and change in view of the major challenges and crisis we are facing at the moment. This is why we are completing the Single Market, slashing red tape, improving the investment climate for small businesses. This is why we are creating a Digital Single Market – to make it such that your location in the EU makes no difference to the price you pay when you book a car online. We are modernising the EU's copyright rules – to increase people's access to cultural content online while ensuring that authors get a fair remuneration. And just two months ago, the EU agreed to abolish roaming charges as of summer 2017, a move many tourists and travellers, notably from Britain, have been calling for, for years. This is why we are negotiating trade agreements with leading nations such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. This is why we are opening markets and breaking down barriers for businesses and workers in all 28 EU Member States.</i></p> | JUN | 2015 | Economic Europe | functional |
| <p><i>We need more Union in our Europe. For the European Union, and for my Commission in particular, this means two things: first, investing in Europe's sources of jobs and growth, notably in our Single Market; and secondly, completing our Economic and Monetary Union to creating the conditions for a lasting recovery. We are acting on both fronts. Together with you and the Member States, we brought to life the €315 billion Investment Plan for Europe, with a new European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI). Less than a year after I announced this plan, we are now at a point where some of the first projects are just taking off: 40,000 households all over France will get a lower energy bill and 6,000 jobs will be created, thanks to Investment Fund-financed improved energy efficiency in buildings. In health clinics in Barcelona, better treatment will be available to patients through new plasma derived therapies, funded by the Investment Fund. In Limerick and other locations in Ireland, families will have improved access to primary healthcare and social services through fourteen new primary care centres. This is just the beginning, with many more projects like these to follow. At the same time as we deploy our Investment Plan, we are upgrading our Single Market to create more opportunities for people and business in all 28 Member States. Thanks to Commission projects such as the Digital Single Market, Capital Markets Union and the Energy Union, we are reducing obstacles to activities cross-border and using the scale of our continent to stimulate innovation, connecting talents and offering a wider choice of products and services.</i></p> | JUN | 2015 | Economic Europe | functional |
| <p><i>One example of where Europe is already leading is in our action on climate change. In Europe we all know that climate change is a major global challenge – and we have known for a while now. The planet we share – its atmosphere and stable climate – cannot cope with the use mankind is making of it. Some parts of the world have been living beyond their means, creating carbon debt and living on it. As we know from economics and crisis management, living beyond our means is not sustainable behaviour. Nature will</i></p> | JUN | 2015 | Green Europe | functional |

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| <p><i>foot us the bill soon enough. In some parts of the world, climate change is changing the sources of conflict – the control over a dam or a lake can be more strategic than an oil refinery. Climate change is even one the root causes of a new migration phenomenon. Climate refugees will become a new challenge – if we do not act swiftly. The world will meet in Paris in 90 days to agree on action to meet the target of keeping the global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius. The EU is on track and made a clear pledge back in March: a binding, economy-wide emissions reduction target of at least 40% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. This is the most ambitious contribution presented to date. Others are following, some only reluctantly. Let me be very clear to our international partners: the EU will not sign just any deal. My priority, Europe's priority, is to adopt an ambitious, robust and binding global climate deal.</i></p> | | | | |
| <p><i>Europe is a small part of the world. If we have something to offer, it is our knowledge and leadership. Around a century ago, one in five of the world's population were in Europe; today that figure is one in nine; in another century it will be one in twenty-five. I believe we can, and should, play our part on the world stage; not for our own vanity, but because we have something to offer. We can show the world the strength that comes from uniting and the strategic interest in acting together. There has never been a more urgent and compelling time to do so. We have more than 40 active conflicts in the world at the moment. While these conflicts rage, whilst families are broken and homes reduced to rubble, I cannot come to you, almost 60 years after the birth of the European Union and pitch you peace. For the world is not at peace. If we want to promote a more peaceful world, we will need more Europe and more Union in our foreign policy. This is most urgent towards Ukraine.</i></p> | JUN | 2015 | Global Europe | functional |
| <p><i>Where the Treaties talk about the Commission, I read this as meaning the Commission as an institution that is politically led by the President and the College of Commissioners. This is why I did not leave the talks with Greece to the Commission bureaucracy alone, in spite of their great expertise and the hard work they are doing. But I spoke personally to our experts regularly, often several times per day, to orient them or to adjust their work. I also ensured that every week, the situation of the negotiations in Greece was discussed at length and very politically in the meetings of the College. Because it is not a technical question whether you increase VAT not only on restaurants, but also on processed food. It is a political and social question. It is not a technical question, but a deeply political question, whether you increase VAT on medicines in a country where 30% of the population is no longer covered by the public health system as a result of the crisis. Or whether you cut military expenditure instead – in a country that continues to have one of the highest military expenditures in the EU. It is certainly not a technical question whether you reduce the pensions of the poorest in society or the minimum wage; or if you instead levy a tax on Greek ship owners. Of course, the figures in what is now the third Greek programme had to add up in the end. But we managed to do this with social fairness in mind.</i></p> | JUN | 2015 | Social Europe | functional |
| <p><i>There is much more to be said but in touching upon the main issues, the main challenges confronting us today, for me there is one thing that becomes clear: whether it is the refugee crisis we are talking about, the economy or foreign policy: we can only succeed as a Union. Who is the Union that represents Europe's 507 million citizens? The Union is not just Brussels or Strasbourg. The</i></p> | JUN | 2015 | Stronger together | foundational |

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| <p><i>Union is the European Institutions. The Union is also the Member States. It is national governments and national Parliaments. It is enough if just one of us fails to deliver for all of us to stumble.</i></p> | | | | |
| <p><i>I have the impression that many seem to have forgotten what being European means. What it means to be part of this Union of Europeans – what it is the farmer in Lithuania has in common with the single mother in Zagreb, the nurse in Valetta or the student in Maastricht. To remember why Europe's nations chose to work together. To remember why crowds celebrated solidarity in the streets of Warsaw on 1 May 2004. To remember why the European flag waved proudly in Puerta del Sol on 1 January 1986. To remember that Europe is a driving force that can help bring about the unification of Cyprus – something I am supporting the two leaders of Cyprus in. Above all, Europe means peace. It is no coincidence that the longest period of peace in written history in Europe started with the formation of the European Communities. 70 years of lasting peace in Europe. In a world with 40 active armed conflicts, which claim the lives of 170,000 people every year. Of course we still have our differences. Yes, we often have controversy. Sometimes we fight. But we fight with words. And we settle our conflicts around the table, not in trenches.</i></p> | JUN | 2016 | Europe as a peace project | foundational |
| <p><i>I am as young as the European project that turns 60 next years in March 2017. I have lived it, worked for it, my whole life. My father believed in Europe because he believed in stability, workers' rights and social progress. Because he understood all too well that peace in Europe was precious – and fragile. I believe in Europe because my father taught me those same values. But what are we teaching our children now? What will they inherit from us? A Union that unravels in disunity? A Union that has forgotten its past and has no vision for the future? Our children deserve better. They deserve a Europe that preserves their way of life. They deserve a Europe that empowers and defends them. They deserve a Europe that protects. It is time we – the institutions, the governments, the citizens – all took responsibility for building that Europe. Together.</i></p> | JUN | 2016 | Europe of common values | foundational |
| <p><i>An integral part of our European way of life is our values. The values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law. Values fought for on battlefields and soapboxes over centuries. We Europeans can never accept Polish workers being harassed, beaten up or even murdered on the streets of Harlow. The free movement of workers is as much a common European value as our fight against discrimination and racism. We Europeans stand firmly against the death penalty. Because we believe in and respect the value of human life. We Europeans also believe in independent, effective justice systems. Independent courts keep governments, companies and people in check. Effective justice systems support economic growth and defend fundamental rights. That is why Europe promotes and defends the rule of law.</i></p> | JUN | 2016 | Europe of common values | foundational |
| <p><i>Since the Madrid bombing of 2004, there have been more than 30 terrorist attacks in Europe – 14 in the last year alone. More than 600 innocent people died in cities like Paris, Brussels, Nice, or Ansbach. Just as we have stood shoulder to shoulder in grief, so must we stand united in our response. The barbaric acts of the past year have shown us again what we are fighting for – the European way of life. In face of the worst of humanity we have to stay true to our values, to ourselves. And what we are is democratic societies, plural societies, open and tolerant. But that tolerance cannot come at the price of our security. That is why my Commission has prioritised security from day one – we criminalised terrorism and foreign fighters across the EU, we cracked</i></p> | JUN | 2016 | Europe of common values | functional |

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| <i>down on the use of firearms and on terrorist financing, we worked with internet companies to get terrorist propaganda offline and we fought radicalisation in Europe's schools and prisons.</i> | | | | |
| <i>Being European also means a fair playing field. This means that workers should get the same pay for the same work in the same place. This is a question of social justice. And this is why the Commission stands behind our proposal on the Posting of Workers Directive. The internal market is not a place where Eastern European workers can be exploited or subjected to lower social standards. Europe is not the Wild West, but a social market economy.</i> | JUN | 2016 | Social Europe | functional |
| <i>A fair playing field also means that in Europe, consumers are protected against cartels and abuses by powerful companies. And that every company, no matter how big or small, has to pay its taxes where it makes its profits. This goes for giants like Apple too, even if their market value is higher than the GDP of 165 countries in the world. In Europe we do not accept powerful companies getting illegal backroom deals on their taxes. The level of taxation in a country like Ireland is not our issue. Ireland has the sovereign right to set the tax level wherever it wants. But it is not right that one company can evade taxes that could have gone to Irish families and businesses, hospitals and schools. The Commission watches over this fairness. This is the social side of competition law. And this is what Europe stands for.</i> | JUN | 2016 | Social Europe | functional |
| <i>Being European also means a culture that protects our workers and our industries in an increasingly globalised world. Like the thousands who risk losing their jobs in Gosselies in Belgium – it is thanks to EU legislation that the company will now need to engage in a true social dialogue. And workers and local authorities can count on European solidarity and the help of EU funds.</i> | JUN | 2016 | Social Europe | functional |
| <i>We Europeans are the world leaders on climate action. It was Europe that brokered the first-ever legally binding, global climate deal. It was Europe that built the coalition of ambition that made agreement in Paris possible. But Europe is now struggling to show the way and be amongst the first to ratify our agreement. Only France, Austria and Hungary have ratified it so far. I call on all Member States and on this Parliament to do your part in the next weeks, not months. We should be faster. Let's get the Paris agreement ratified now. It can be done. It is a question of political will. And it is about Europe's global influence.</i> | JUN | 2016 | Green Europe | functional |
| <i>A Europe that protects also defends our interests beyond our borders. The facts are plain: The world is getting bigger. And we are getting smaller. Today we Europeans make up 8% of the world population – we will only represent 5% in 2050. By then you would not see a single EU country among the top world economies. But the EU together? We would still be topping the charts. Our enemies would like us to fragment. Our competitors would benefit from our division. Only together are we and will we remain a force to be reckoned with.</i> | JUN | 2016 | Stronger together | foundational |
| <i>I just came back from the G20 meeting in China. Europe occupies 7 chairs at the table of this important global gathering. Despite our big presence, there were more questions than we had common answers to. Will Europe still be able to conclude trade deals and shape economic, social and environmental standards for the world? Will Europe's economy finally recover or be stuck in low growth and low inflation for the next decade? Will Europe still be a world leader when it comes to the fight for human rights and fundamental values? Will Europe speak up, with one voice, when territorial integrity is under threat, in violation of international</i> | JUN | 2016 | Global Europe | functional |

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| <i>law? Or will Europe disappear from the international scene and leave it to others to shape the world? I know that you here in this House would be only too willing to give clear answers to these questions. But we need our words to be followed by joint action. Otherwise, they will be just that: words. And with words alone, you cannot shape international affairs.</i> | | | | |
| <i>Being European also means being open and trading with our neighbours, instead of going to war with them. It means being the world's biggest trading bloc, with trade agreements in place or under negotiation with over 140 partners across the globe. And trade means jobs – for every €1 billion we get in exports, 14,000 extra jobs are created across the EU. And more than 30 million jobs, 1 in 7 of all jobs in the EU, now depend on exports to the rest of the world. That is why Europe is working to open up markets with Canada – one of our closest partners and one which shares our interests, our values, our respect for the rule of law and our understanding of cultural diversity. The EU-Canada trade agreement is the best and most progressive deal the EU has ever negotiated. And I will work with you and with all Member States to see this agreement ratified as soon as possible.</i> | JUN | 2016 | Economic Europe | functional |
| <i>Being European means the right to have your personal data protected by strong, European laws. Because Europeans do not like drones overhead recording their every move, or companies stockpiling their every mouse click. This is why Parliament, Council and Commission agreed in May this year a common European Data Protection Regulation. This is a strong European law that applies to companies wherever they are based and whenever they are processing your data. Because in Europe, privacy matters. This is a question of human dignity.</i> | JUN | 2016 | Social Europe | functional |
| <i>Being European also means standing up for our steel industry. We already have 37 anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures in place to protect our steel industry from unfair competition. But we need to do more, as overproduction in some parts of the world is putting European producers out of business.</i> | JUN | 2016 | Economic Europe | functional |
| <i>I cannot and will not accept that Europe is and remains the continent of youth unemployment. I cannot and will not accept that the millennials, Generation Y, might be the first generation in 70 years to be poorer than their parents. Of course, this is mainly a task of national governments. But the European Union can support their efforts. We are doing this with the EU Youth Guarantee that was launched three years ago. My Commission enhanced the effectiveness and sped up delivery of the Youth Guarantee. More than 9 million young people have already benefitted from this programme. That is 9 million young people who got a job, traineeship or apprenticeship because of the EU. And we will continue to roll out the Youth Guarantee across Europe, improving the skillset of Europeans and reaching out to the regions and young people most in need.</i> | JUN | 2016 | Social Europe | functional |
| <i>Solidarity is the glue that keeps our Union together. The word solidarity appears 16 times in the Treaties which all our Member States agreed and ratified. Our European budget is living proof of financial solidarity. There is impressive solidarity when it comes to jointly applying European sanctions when Russia violates international law. The euro is an expression of solidarity. Our development policy is a strong external sign of solidarity. And when it comes to managing the refugee crisis, we have started to see solidarity. I am convinced much more solidarity is needed. But I also know that solidarity must be given voluntarily. It must come</i> | JUN | 2016 | Social Europe | functional |

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| <i>from the heart. It cannot be forced. We often show solidarity most readily when faced with emergencies. When the Portuguese hills were burning, Italian planes doused the flames. When floods cut off the power in Romania, Swedish generators turned the lights back on. When thousands of refugees arrived on Greek shores, Slovakian tents provided shelter. In the same spirit, the Commission is proposing today to set up a European Solidarity Corps. Young people across the EU will be able to volunteer their help where it is needed most, to respond to crisis situations, like the refugee crisis or the recent earthquakes in Italy.</i> | | | | |
| <i>I have witnessed several decades of EU integration. There were many strong moments. Of course, there were many difficult times too, and times of crisis. But never before have I seen such little common ground between our Member States. So few areas where they agree to work together. Never before have I heard so many leaders speak only of their domestic problems, with Europe mentioned only in passing, if at all. Never before have I seen representatives of the EU institutions setting very different priorities, sometimes in direct opposition to national governments and national Parliaments. It is as if there is almost no intersection between the EU and its national capitals anymore. Never before have I seen national governments so weakened by the forces of populism and paralysed by the risk of defeat in the next elections. Never before have I seen so much fragmentation, and so little commonality in our Union. We now have a very important choice to make. Do we give in to a very natural feeling of frustration? Do we allow ourselves to become collectively depressed? Do we want to let our Union unravel before our eyes? Or do we say: Is this not the time to pull ourselves together? Is this not the time to roll up our sleeves and double, triple our efforts? Is this not the time when Europe needs more determined leadership than ever, rather than politicians abandoning ship?</i> | JUN | 2016 | Stronger together | foundational |
| <i>Europe can only work if we all work for unity and commonality, and forget the rivalry between competences and institutions. Only then will Europe be more than the sum of its parts. And only then can Europe be stronger and better than it is today. Only then will leaders of the EU institutions and national governments be able to regain the trust of Europe's citizens in our common project. Because Europeans are tired of the endless disputes, quarrels and bickering. Europeans want concrete solutions to the very pertinent problem that our Union is facing. And they want more than promises, resolutions and summit conclusions. They have heard and seen these too often. Europeans want common decisions followed by swift and efficient implementation.</i> | JUN | 2016 | Stronger together | foundational |
| <i>Europe is a cord of many strands – it only works when we are all pulling in the same direction: EU institutions, national governments and national Parliaments alike. And we have to show again that this is possible, in a selected number of areas where common solutions are most urgent. I am therefore proposing a positive agenda of concrete European actions for the next twelve months. Because I believe the next twelve months are decisive if we want to reunite our Union. If we want to overcome the tragic divisions between East and West which have opened up in recent months. If we want to show that we can be fast and decisive on the things that really matter. If we want to show to the world that Europe is still a force capable of joint action. We have to get to work.</i> | JUN | 2016 | Stronger together | foundational |
| <i>A strong part of our European way of life that I want to preserve is our agricultural sector. The Commission will always stand by our farmers, particularly when they go through difficult moments as is the case today. Last year, the dairy sector was hit with a ban</i> | JUN | 2016 | Economic Europe | functional |

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| <i>imposed by Russia. This is why the Commission mobilised €1 billion in support of milk farmers to help them get back on their feet. Because I will not accept that milk is cheaper than water.</i> | | | | |
| <i>Still, even though Europe is proud to be a soft power of global importance, we must not be naïve. Soft power is not enough in our increasingly dangerous neighbourhood. Take the brutal fight over Syria. Its consequences for Europe are immediate. Attacks in our cities by terrorists trained in Daesh camps. But where is the Union, where are its Member States, in negotiations towards a settlement? Federica Mogherini, our High Representative and my Vice-President, is doing a fantastic job. But she needs to become our European Foreign Minister via whom all diplomatic services, of big and small countries alike, pool their forces to achieve leverage in international negotiations. This is why I call today for a European Strategy for Syria. Federica should have a seat at the table when the future of Syria is being discussed. So that Europe can help rebuild a peaceful Syrian nation and a pluralistic, tolerant civil society in Syria. Europe needs to toughen up. Nowhere is this truer than in our defence policy. Europe can no longer afford to piggy-back on the military might of others or let France alone defend its honour in Mali. We have to take responsibility for protecting our interests and the European way of life.</i> | JUN | 2016 | Global Europe | functional |
| <i>Today I would like to present you my view: my own 'sixth scenario', if you will. This scenario is rooted in decades of first-hand experience. I have lived, fought and worked for the European project my entire life. I have seen and lived through good times and bad. I have sat on many different sides of the table: as a Minister, as Prime Minister, as President of the Eurogroup, and now as President of the Commission. I was there in Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon as our Union evolved and enlarged. I have always fought for Europe. At times I have suffered because of Europe. And even despaired for Europe. Through thick and thin, I have never lost my love of Europe. But there is, as we know, rarely love without pain. Love for Europe because Europe and the European Union have achieved something unique in this fraying world: peace within and peace outside of Europe. Prosperity for many if not yet for all.</i> | JUN | 2017 | Europe as a peace project | foundational |
| <i>Our values are our compass. For me, Europe is more than just a single market. More than money, more than a currency, more than the euro. It was always about values. That is why, in my sixth scenario, there are three fundamentals, three unshakeable principles: freedom, equality and the rule of law. (...) These three principles – freedom, equality and the rule of law – must remain the foundations on which we build a more united, stronger and more democratic Union.</i> | JUN | 2017 | Europe of common values | foundational |
| <i>Europe is first of all a Union of freedom. Freedom from the kind of oppression and dictatorship our continent knows all too well – sadly none more than central and Eastern European countries. Freedom to voice your opinion, as a citizen and as a journalist – a freedom we too often take for granted. It was on these freedoms that our Union was built. But freedom does not fall from the sky. It must be fought for. In Europe and throughout the world.</i> | JUN | 2017 | Europe of common values | foundational |
| <i>In a Union of equals, there can be no second class citizens. It is unacceptable that in 2017 there are still children dying of diseases that should long have been eradicated in Europe. Children in Romania or Italy must have the same access to measles vaccines as</i> | JUN | 2017 | Social Europe | functional |

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| <i>children in other European countries. No ifs, no buts. This is why we are working with all Member States to support national vaccination efforts. Avoidable deaths must not occur in Europe.</i> | | | | |
| <i>Third, in Europe the strength of the law replaced the law of the strong. The rule of law means that law and justice are upheld by an independent judiciary. Accepting and respecting a final judgement is what it means to be part of a Union based on the rule of law. Our Member States gave final jurisdiction to the European Court of Justice. The judgements of the Court have to be respected by all. To undermine them, or to undermine the independence of national courts, is to strip citizens of their fundamental rights. The rule of law is not optional in the European Union. It is a must. Our Union is not a State but it must be a community of law.</i> | JUN | 2017 | Europe of common values | foundational |
| <i>Even if it saddens me to see that solidarity is not yet equally shared across all our Member States, Europe as a whole has continued to show solidarity. Last year alone, our Member States resettled or granted asylum to over 720,000 refugees – three times as much as the United States, Canada and Australia combined. Europe, contrary to what some say, is not a fortress and must never become one. Europe is and must remain the continent of solidarity where those fleeing persecution can find refuge.</i> | JUN | 2017 | Global Europe | functional |
| <i>Last year, we set the global rules of the game with the Paris Agreement ratified here, in this very House. Set against the collapse of ambition in the United States, Europe must ensure we make our planet great again. It is the shared heritage of all of humanity.</i> | JUN | 2017 | Green Europe | functional |
| <i>Europe was battered and bruised by a year that shook our very foundation. We only had two choices. Either come together around a positive European agenda or each retreat into our own corners. Faced with this choice, I argued for unity. I proposed a positive agenda to help create – as I said last year – a Europe that protects, a Europe that empowers, a Europe that defends. Over the past twelve months, the European Parliament has helped bring this agenda to life. We continue to make progress with each passing day. Just last night you worked to find an agreement on trade defence instruments and on doubling our European investment capacity. And you succeeded. Thank you for that. I also want to thank the 27 leaders of our Member States. Days after my speech last year, they welcomed my agenda at their summit in Bratislava. In doing so they chose unity. They chose to rally around our common ground. Together, we showed that Europe can deliver for its citizens when and where it matters. Ever since, we have been slowly but surely gathering momentum.</i> | JUN | 2017 | Stronger together | functional |
| <i>Solidarity cannot be an exclusively intra-European affair. We must also show solidarity with Africa. Africa is a noble continent, a young continent, the cradle of humanity. Our €2.7 billion EU Africa Trust Fund is creating employment opportunities across the continent. The EU budget fronted the bulk of the money, but all our Member States combined have still only contributed €150 million. The Fund is currently reaching its limits. We know – or we should know – the dangers of a lack of funding – in 2015 many migrants headed towards Europe when the UN's World Food Programme ran out of funds. I call on all Member States to now match their actions with their words and ensure the Africa Trust Fund does not meet the same fate. The risk is high.</i> | JUN | 2017 | Global Europe | functional |
| <i>Europe was not made to stand still. It must never do so. Helmut Kohl and Jacques Delors, whom I had the honour to know, taught me that Europe only moves forward when it is bold. The single market, Schengen and the single currency: these were all ideas that were written off as pipe dreams before they happened. And yet these three ambitious projects are now a part of our daily reality.</i> | JUN | 2017 | Economic Europe | functional |

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| <i>Now that Europe is doing better, people tell me I should not rock the boat. But now is not the time to err on the side of caution. We started to fix the European roof. But today and tomorrow we must patiently, floor by floor, moment by moment, inspiration by inspiration, continue to add new floors to the European House. We must complete the European House now that the sun is shining and whilst it still is. Because when the next clouds appear on the horizon – and they will appear one day – it will be too late. So let's throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the harbour. And catch the trade winds in our sails.</i> | | | | |
| <i>In a Union of equals, there can be no second class workers. Workers should earn the same pay for the same work in the same place. This is why the Commission proposed new rules on posting of workers. We should make sure that all EU rules on labour mobility are enforced in a fair, simple and effective way by a new European inspection and enforcement body. It is absurd to have a Banking Authority to police banking standards, but no common Labour Authority for ensuring fairness in our single market. We will create such an Authority.</i> | JUN | 2017 | Social Europe | functional |
| <i>In a Union of equals, there can be no second class consumers either. I cannot accept that in some parts of Europe, in Central and Eastern Europe, people are sold food of lower quality than in other countries, despite the packaging and branding being identical. Slovaks do not deserve less fish in their fish fingers. Hungarians less meat in their meals. Czechs less cacao in their chocolate. EU law outlaws such practices already. And we must now equip national authorities with stronger powers to cut out these illegal practices wherever they exist.</i> | JUN | 2017 | Social Europe | functional |
| <i>History can also show up, unannounced, in the life of nations and be slow to leave. Such was the fate of Europe's nations during the Great War starting in 1914. A war which took the sunny, optimistic and peaceful continent of the time by surprise. In 1913, Europeans expected to live a lasting peace. And yet, just a year later, a brutal war broke out amongst brothers, engulfing the continent. I speak of these times not because I believe we are on the brink of another catastrophe. But because Europe is the guardian of peace. We should be thankful we live on a peaceful continent, made possible by the European Union. So let us show the European Union a bit more respect. Let us stop dragging its name through the mud and start defending our communal way of life more. We should embrace the kind of patriotism that is used for good, and never against others. We should reject the kind of exaggerated nationalism that projects hate and destroys all in its path. The kind of nationalism that points the finger at others instead of searching for ways to better live together. Living up to Europe's rallying cry – never again war – is our eternal duty, our perpetual responsibility. We must all remain vigilant.</i> | JUN | 2018 | Europe as a peace project | foundational |
| <i>The world today needs a strong and united Europe. A Europe that works for peace, trade agreements and stable currency relations, even as some become more prone to trade and currency wars. I am not in favour of a selfish unilateralism that defies expectations and dashes hopes. I will always champion multilateralism. If Europe were to unite all the political, economic and military might of its nations, its role in the world could be strengthened. We will always be a global payer but it is time we started being a global player too. This is why – despite great resistance at the time – I reignited the idea of a Europe of Defence as early as 2014. And this is why I will continue to work day and night over the next months to see the European Defence Fund and Permanent Structured Cooperation in Defence become fully operational.</i> | JUN | 2018 | Global Europe | functional |

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| <i>Europe can export stability, as we have done with the successive enlargements of our Union. For me, these are and will remain success stories – for we were able to reconcile Europe's history and geography. But there is more to be done. We must find unity when it comes to the Western Balkans – once and for all. Should we not, our immediate neighbourhood will be shaped by others.</i> | JUN | 2018 | Global Europe | functional |
| <i>The Commission will resist all attacks on the rule of law. We continue to be very concerned by the developments in some of our Member States. Article 7 must be applied whenever the rule of law is threatened. First Vice-President Timmermans is doing a remarkable but often lonely job of defending the rule of law. The whole Commission, and I personally, support him fully. But we need to be very clear on one point: judgements from the Court of Justice must be respected and implemented. This is vital. The European Union is a community of law. Respecting the rule of law and abiding by Court decisions are not optional.</i> | JUN | 2018 | Europe of common values | foundational |
| <i>When needed, Europe must act as one. We proved this when relentlessly defending the Paris Agreement on climate change. We did this because, as Europeans, we want to leave a healthier planet behind for those that follow. I share our Energy Commissioner's conclusions when it comes to our targets for reducing CO2 emissions by 2030. They are both scientifically accurate and politically indispensable. This summer's droughts are a stark reminder – not only for farmers – of just how important that work is to safeguard the future for generations of Europeans. We cannot turn a blind eye to the challenge in front of our noses. We – Commission and Parliament – must look to the future.</i> | JUN | 2018 | Green Europe | functional |
| <i>Europe has also reaffirmed its position as a trade power. Our global trading position is the living proof of the need to share sovereignty. The European Union now has trade agreements with 70 countries around the world, covering 40% of the world's GDP. These agreements – so often contested but so unjustly – help us export Europe's high standards for food safety, workers' rights, the environment and consumer rights far beyond our borders. When, amidst dangerous global tensions, I went to Beijing, Tokyo and Washington in the space of one week last July, I was able to speak, as President of the European Commission, on behalf of the world's biggest single market. On behalf of a Union accounting for a fifth of the world's economy. On behalf of a Union willing to stand up for its values and interests. I showed Europe to be an open continent. But not a naïve one. The strength of a united Europe, both in principle and in practice, gave me the clout I needed to get tangible results for citizens and businesses alike. United, as a Union, Europe is a force to be reckoned with.</i> | JUN | 2018 | Global Europe | functional |
| <i>European sovereignty can never be to the detriment of others. Europe is a continent of openness and tolerance. It will remain so. Europe will never be a fortress, turning its back on the world or those suffering within it. Europe is not an island. It must and will champion multilateralism. The world we live in belongs to all and not a select few.</i> | JUN | 2018 | Global Europe | functional |
| <i>Ten years after Lehman Brothers, Europe has largely turned the page on an economic and financial crisis which came from outside but which cut deep at home. Europe's economy has now grown for 21 consecutive quarters. Jobs have returned, with almost 12 million new jobs created since 2014. 12 million – that is more jobs than there are people in Belgium. Never have so many men and women – 239 million people – been in work in Europe. Youth unemployment is at 14.8%. This is still too high a figure but is the lowest it has been since the year 2000. Investment is back, thanks notably to our European Fund for Strategic Investments, which</i> | JUN | 2018 | Economic Europe | functional |

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| <p><i>some – less and less – still call the “Juncker Fund”. A Fund that has triggered 335 billion euro worth of public and private investment. We are closing in on 400 billion. And then there is Greece: After what can only be described as some very painful years, marked by unprecedented social hardship – though also by unprecedented solidarity – Greece successfully exited its programme and is now back on its own two feet. I applaud the people of Greece for their Herculean efforts. Efforts which other Europeans continue to underestimate. I have always fought for Greece, its dignity, its role in Europe, and its place inside the euro area. Of this I am proud.</i></p> | | | | |
| <p><i>I would like to say a few words about the increasingly worrying way in which we air our disagreements. Heated exchanges amongst governments and institutions are becoming more and more common. Harsh or hurtful words will not get Europe anywhere. The tone is not only worrying when it comes to political discourse. It is also true of the way some seek to shut down debate altogether by targeting media and journalists. Europe must always be a place where freedom of the press is sacrosanct. Too many of our journalists are intimidated, attacked, or even murdered. We must do more to protect our democracy and its agents – our journalists. In general, we must do more to revive the lost art of compromise. Compromise does not mean sacrificing our convictions or selling out on our values.</i></p> | JUN | 2018 | Europe of common values | functional |
| <p><i>As the French philosophe Blaise Pascal said: I like things that go together. In order to stand on its own two feet, Europe must move forward as one. To love Europe, is to love its nations. To love your nation is to love Europe. Patriotism is a virtue. Unchecked nationalism is riddled with both poison and deceit. In short, we must remain true to ourselves.</i></p> | JUN | 2018 | Europe of common values | foundational |
| <p><i>It is because of our single market – the largest in the world – that we can set standards for big data, artificial intelligence, and automation. And that we are able to uphold Europeans' values, rights and identities in doing so. But we can only do so if we stand united. A strong and united Europe is what allows its Member States to reach for the stars. It is our Galileo programme that is today keeping Europe in the space race. No single Member State could have put 26 satellites in orbit, for the benefit of 400 million users worldwide. No single Member State could have done this alone. Galileo is a success in great part, if not entirely, thanks to Europe. No Europe, no Galileo. We should be proud. Mr President, The geopolitical situation makes this Europe's hour: the time for European sovereignty has come. It is time Europe took its destiny into its own hands. It is time Europe developed what I coined “Weltpolitikfähigkeit” – the capacity to play a role, as a Union, in shaping global affairs. Europe has to become a more sovereign actor in international relations. European sovereignty is born of Member States' national sovereignty and does not replace it. Sharing sovereignty – when and where needed – makes each of our nation states stronger. This belief that “united we stand taller” is the very essence of what it means to be part of the European Union.</i></p> | JUN | 2018 | Stronger together | foundational |
| <p><i>We need more solidarity not for solidarity's sake but for the sake of efficiency. This is true in the case of our civil protection mechanism. When fires rage in one European country, all of Europe burns. The most striking images from this summer were not only those of the formidable fires but of the Swedish people greeting Polish firefighters coming to their aid – Europe at its best.</i></p> | JUN | 2018 | Social Europe | functional |

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| <p><i>There is strong demand for Europe throughout the world. To meet such high demand, Europe will have to speak with one voice on the world stage. In the concert of nations, Europe's voice must ring clear in order to be heard. Federica Mogherini has made Europe's diplomacy more coherent. But let us not slide back into the incoherence of competing and parallel national diplomacies. Europe diplomacy must be conducted in the singular. Our solidarity must be all-embracing.</i></p> | JUN | 2018 | Stronger together | functional |
| <p><i>The pandemic reminded us of many things we may have forgotten or taken for granted. We were reminded how linked our economies are and how crucial a fully functioning Single Market is to our prosperity and the way we do things. The Single Market is all about opportunity - for a consumer to get value for money, a company to sell anywhere in Europe and for industry to drive its global competitiveness. And for all of us, it is about the opportunity to make the most of the freedoms we cherish as Europeans. It gives our companies the scale they need to prosper and is a safe haven for them in times of trouble. We rely on it every day to make our lives easier – and it is critical for managing the crisis and recovering our strength. Let's give it a boost. We must tear down the barriers of the Single Market. We must cut red tape. We must step up implementation and enforcement. And we must restore the four freedoms – in full and as fast as possible. The linchpin of this is a fully functioning Schengen area of free movement. We will work with Parliament and Member States to bring this high up our political agenda and we will propose a new strategy for the future of Schengen. Based on this strong internal market, the European industry has long powered our economy, providing a stable living for millions and creating the social hubs around which our communities are built.</i></p> | VDL | 2020 | Economic Europe | functional |
| <p><i>We must rebuild the trust amongst us and move forward together. And this trust is at the very heart of our Union and the way we do things together. It is anchored in our founding values, our democracies and in our Community of Law – as Walter Hallstein used to call it. This is not an abstract term. The rule of law helps protect people from the rule of the powerful. It is the guarantor of our most basic of every day rights and freedoms. It allows us to give our opinion and be informed by a free press. Before the end of the month, the Commission will adopt the first annual rule of law report covering all Member States. It is a preventive tool for early detection of challenges and for finding solutions. I want this to be a starting point for Commission, Parliament and Member States to ensure there is no backsliding. The Commission attaches the highest importance to the rule of law. This is why we will ensure that money from our budget and NextGenerationEU is protected against any kind of fraud, corruption and conflict of interest. This is non-negotiable. But the last months have also reminded us how fragile it can be. We have a duty to always be vigilant to care and nurture for the rule of law. Breaches of the rule of law cannot be tolerated. I will continue to defend it and the integrity of our European institutions. Be it about the primacy of European law, the freedom of the press, the independence of the judiciary or the sale of golden passports. European values are not for sale.</i></p> | VDL | 2020 | Europe of common values | foundational |

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| <p><i>Honourable Members, These values are more important than ever. I say that because when I think about the state of our Union, I am reminded of the words of John Hume – one of the great Europeans who sadly passed away this year. If so many people live in peace today on the island of Ireland, it is in large part because of his unwavering belief in humanity and conflict resolution. He used to say that conflict was about difference and that peace was about respect for difference. And as he so rightly reminded this House in 1998: “The European visionaries decided that difference is not a threat, difference is natural. Difference is the essence of humanity”. These words are just as important today as they ever have been. Because when we look around, we ask ourselves, where is the essence of humanity when three children in Wisconsin watch their father shot by police while they sit in the car? We ask where is the essence of humanity when anti-semitic carnival costumes openly parade on our streets? Where is the essence of humanity when every single day Roma people are excluded from society and others are held back simply because of the colour of their skin or their religious belief? I am proud to live in Europe, in this open society of values and diversity. But even here in this Union – these stories are a daily reality for so many people. And this reminds us that progress on fighting racism and hate is fragile – it is hard won but very easily lost. So now is the moment to make change. To build a truly anti-racist Union – that goes from condemnation to action. And the Commission is putting forward an action plan to start making that happen. As part of this, we will propose to extend the list of EU crimes to all forms of hate crime and hate speech – whether because of race, religion, gender or sexuality. Hate is hate – and no one should have to put up with it. We will strengthen our racial equality laws where there are gaps. We will use our budget to address discrimination in areas such as employment, housing or healthcare. We will get tougher on enforcement when implementation lags behind. Because in this Union, fighting racism will never be optional. We will improve education and knowledge on the historical, cultural causes of racism. We will tackle unconscious bias that exists in people, institutions and even in algorithms. And we will appoint the Commission's first-ever anti-racism coordinator to keep this at the top of our agenda and to work directly with people, civil society and institutions.</i></p> | VDL | 2020 | Europe of common values | functional |
| <p><i>I will not rest when it comes to building a Union of equality. A Union where you can be who you are and love who you want – without fear of recrimination or discrimination. Because being yourself is not your ideology. It's your identity. And no one can ever take it away. So I want to be crystal clear – LGBTQI-free zones are humanity free zones. And they have no place in our Union. And to make sure that we support the whole community, the Commission will soon put forward a strategy to strengthen LGBTQI rights. As part of this, I will also push for mutual recognition of family relations in the EU. If you are parent in one country, you are parent in every country.</i></p> | VDL | 2020 | Europe of common values | foundational |
| <p><i>When I took office, I vowed to create an instrument to protect workers and businesses from external shocks. Because I knew from my experience as a Minister for Labour and Social Affairs that these schemes work. They keep people in jobs, skills in companies and SMEs in business. These SMEs are the motor of our economy and will be the engine of our recovery. This is why the Commission created the SURE programme. And I want to thank this House for working on it in record time. If Europe has so far avoided mass unemployment seen elsewhere, it is thanks in large part to the fact that around 40 million people applied for short-time work schemes. This speed and unity of purpose means that 16 countries will soon receive almost 90 billion euros from</i></p> | VDL | 2020 | Social Europe | functional |

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| <p><i>SURE to support workers and companies. From Lithuania to Spain, it will give peace of mind to families who need that income to put food on the table or to pay the rent. And it will help protect millions of jobs, incomes and companies right across our Union. This is real European solidarity in action. And it reflects the fact that in our Union the dignity of work must be sacred.</i></p> | | | | |
| <p><i>The people of Europe are still suffering. It is a period of profound anxiety for millions who are concerned about the health of their families, the future of their jobs or simply just getting through until the end of the month. The pandemic – and the uncertainty that goes with it – is not over. And the recovery is still in its early stage. So our first priority is to pull each other through this. To be there for those that need it. And thanks to our unique social market economy, Europe can do just that. It is above all a human economy that protects us against the great risks of life - illness, ill-fortune, unemployment or poverty. It offers stability and helps us better absorb shocks. It creates opportunity and prosperity by promoting innovation, growth and fair competition. Never before has that enduring promise of protection, stability and opportunity been more important than it is today.</i></p> | VDL | 2020 | Social Europe | functional |
| <p><i>The European Union and its Member States responded to an unprecedented crisis with an unprecedented response. By showing it was united and up to the task, Europe provided the stability our economies needed. The Commission immediately triggered the general escape clause for the first time in our history. We flexibilised our European funds and State aid rules. Authorising more than 3 trillion euro in support to companies and industry: From fishermen in Croatia and farmers in Greece, to SMEs in Italy and freelancers in Denmark. The European Central Bank took decisive action through its PEPP programme. The Commission proposed NextGenerationEU and a revamped budget in record time. It combines investment with much needed reforms. The Council endorsed it in record time. This House is working towards voting on it with maximum speed. For the first time – and for exceptional times - Europe has put in place its own common tools to complement national fiscal stabilisers. This is a remarkable moment of unity for our Union. This is an achievement that we should take collective pride in. Now is the time to hold our course. We have all seen the forecasts. We can expect our economies to start moving again after a 12% drop in GDP in the second quarter. But as the virus lingers so does the uncertainty – here in Europe and around the world. So this is definitely not the time to withdraw support. Our economies need continued policy support and a delicate balance will need to be struck between providing financial support and ensuring fiscal sustainability. In the longer-term there is no greater way to stability and competitiveness than through a stronger Economic and Monetary Union. Confidence in the euro has never been stronger. The historic agreement on NextGenerationEU shows the political backing that it has. We must now use this opportunity to make structural reforms in our economies and complete the Capital Markets Union and the Banking Union. Deep and liquid capital markets are essential to give businesses access to the finance they need to grow and invest in recovery and in the future. And they are also a pre-requisite to further strengthen the international role of the euro. So let's get to work and finally complete this generational project.</i></p> | VDL | 2020 | Economic Europe | functional |
| <p><i>While much of the world's activity froze during lockdowns and shutdowns, the planet continued to get dangerously hotter. We see it all around us: from homes evacuated due to glacier collapse on the Mont Blanc, to fires burning through Oregon, to crops destroyed in Romania by the most severe drought in decades. But we also saw nature come back into our lives. We longed for green spaces and cleaner air for our mental health and our physical wellbeing. We know change is needed – and we also know it is</i></p> | VDL | 2020 | Green Europe | functional |

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| <p><i>possible. The European Green Deal is our blueprint to make that transformation. At the heart of it is our mission to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. But we will not get there with the status quo – we need to go faster and do things better.</i></p> | | | | |
| <p><i>We looked in-depth at every sector to see how fast we could go and how to do it in a responsible, evidence-based way. We held a wide public consultation and conducted an extensive impact assessment. On this basis, the European Commission is proposing to increase the 2030 target for emission reduction to at least 55%. I recognise that this increase from 40 to 55 is too much for some, and not enough for others. But our impact assessment clearly shows that our economy and industry can manage this. And they want it too. Just yesterday, 170 business leaders and investors – from SME's to some of the world's biggest companies - wrote to me calling on Europe to set a target of at least 55%. Our impact assessment clearly shows that meeting this target would put the EU firmly on track for climate neutrality by 2050 and for meeting our Paris Agreement obligations. And if others follow our lead, the world will be able to keep warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius. I am fully aware that many of our partners are far away from that – and I will come back to the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism later. But for us, the 2030 target is ambitious, achievable, and beneficial for Europe. We can do it. We have already shown we can do it. While emissions dropped 25% since 1990, our economy grew by more than 60%. The difference is we now have more technology, more expertise and more investment. And we are already embarking towards a circular economy with carbon neutral production. We have more young people pushing for change. We have more proof that what is good for the climate is good for business and is good for us all. And we have a solemn promise to leave no one behind in this transformation. With our Just Transition Fund we will support the regions that have a bigger and more costly change to make. We have it all. Now it's our responsibility to implement it all and make it happen.</i></p> | VDL | 2020 | Green Europe | functional |
| <p><i>The pandemic has simultaneously shown both the fragility of the global system and the importance of cooperation to tackle collective challenges. In the face of the crisis, some around the world choose to retreat into isolation. Others actively destabilise the system. Europe chooses to reach out. Our leadership is not about self-serving propaganda. It is not about Europe First. It is about being the first to seriously answer the call when it matters. In the pandemic, European planes delivering thousands of tonnes of protective equipment landed everywhere from Sudan to Afghanistan, Somalia to Venezuela. None of us will be safe until all of us are safe – wherever we live, whatever we have. An accessible, affordable and safe vaccine is the world's most promising way to do that. At the beginning of the pandemic, there was no funding, no global framework for a COVID vaccine – just the rush to be the first to get one. This is the moment the EU stepped up to lead the global response. With civil society, the G20, WHO and others we brought more than 40 countries together to raise 16 billion euro to finance research on vaccines, tests and treatments for the whole world. This is the EU's unmatched convening power in action.</i></p> | VDL | 2020 | Global Europe | functional |
| <p><i>We are firm believers in the strength and value of cooperating in international bodies. It is with a strong United Nations that we can find long-term solutions for crises like Libya or Syria. It is with a strong World Health Organisation that we can better prepare and respond to global pandemics or local outbreaks – be it Corona or Ebola. And it is with a strong World Trade Organisation that we can ensure fair competition for all. But the truth is also that the need to revitalise and reform the multilateral system has never been so urgent. Our global system has grown into a creeping paralysis. Major powers are either pulling out of institutions or</i></p> | VDL | 2020 | Global Europe | functional |

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| <p>taking them hostage for their own interests. Neither road will lead us anywhere. Yes, we want change. But change by design – not by destruction. And this is why I want the EU to lead reforms of the WTO and WHO so they are fit for today's world. But we know that multilateral reforms take time and in the meantime the world will not stop. Without any doubt, there is a clear need for Europe to take clear positions and quick actions on global affairs.</p> | | | | |
| <p>One of the most courageous minds of our times, Andrei Sakharov – a man so admired by this House - always spoke of his unshakeable belief in the hidden strength of the human spirit. In these last six months, Europeans have shown how strong that human spirit really is. We saw it in the care workers who moved into nursing homes to look after the ill and the elderly. In the doctors and nurses who became family members for those in their last breath. In the front line workers who worked day after night, week after week, who took risks so most of us didn't have to. We are inspired by their empathy, bravery and sense of duty – and I want to start this speech by paying tribute to them all. Their stories also reveal a lot about the state of our world and the state of our Union. They show the power of humanity and the sense of mourning which will live long in our society. And they expose to us the fragility all around us. A virus a thousand times smaller than a grain of sand exposed how delicate life can be. It laid bare the strains on our health systems and the limits of a model that values wealth above wellbeing. It brought into sharper focus the planetary fragility that we see every day through melting glaciers, burning forests and now through global pandemics. It changed the very way we behave and communicate – keeping our arms at length, our faces behind masks. It showed us just how fragile our community of values really is – and how quickly it can be called into question around the world and even here in our Union. But people want to move out of this corona world, out of this fragility, out of uncertainty. They are ready for change and they are ready to move on. And this is the moment for Europe. The moment for Europe to lead the way from this fragility towards a new vitality. And this is what I want to talk about today. Honourable Members, I say this because in the last months we have rediscovered the value of what we hold in common. As individuals, we have all sacrificed a piece of our personal liberty for the safety of others. And as a Union, we all shared a part of our sovereignty for the common good. We turned fear and division between Member States into confidence in our Union. We showed what is possible when we trust each other and trust our European institutions. And with all of that, we choose to not only repair and recover for the here and now, but to shape a better way of living for the world of tomorrow. This is NextGenerationEU.</p> | VDL | 2020 | Stronger together | foundational |
| <p>First, Europe must continue to protect lives and livelihoods. This is all the more important in the middle of a pandemic that shows no signs of running out of steam or intensity. We know how quickly numbers can spiral out of control. So we must continue to handle this pandemic with extreme care, responsibility and unity. In the last six months, our health systems and workers have produced miracles. Every country has worked to do its best for its citizens. And Europe has done more together than ever before. When Member States closed borders, we created green lanes for goods. When more than 600,000 European citizens were stranded all over the world, the EU brought them home. When some countries introduced export bans for critical medical goods, we stopped that and ensured that critical medical supply could go where it was needed. We worked with European industry to increase the production of masks, gloves, tests and ventilators. Our Civil Protection Mechanism ensured that doctors from Romania could treat</p> | VDL | 2020 | Social Europe | functional |

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| <i>patients in Italy or that Latvia could send masks to its Baltic neighbours. And we achieved this without having full competences. For me, it is crystal clear – we need to build a stronger European Health Union. And to start making this a reality, we must now draw the first lessons from the health crisis.</i> | | | | |
| <i>We believe in the universal value of democracy and the rights of the individual. Europe is not without issues – think for example of anti-semitism. But we discuss them publicly. Criticism and opposition are not only accepted but are legally protected.</i> | VDL | 2020 | Europe of common values | foundational |
| <i>Trust is the foundation of any strong partnership. And Europe will always be ready to build strong partnerships with our closest neighbours. That starts with the Western Balkans. The decision six months ago to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia was truly historic. Indeed, the future of the whole region lies in the EU. We share the same history, we share the same destiny. The Western Balkans are part of Europe - and not just a stopover on the Silk Road.</i> | VDL | 2020 | Global Europe | functional |
| <i>We will continue to believe in open and fair trade across the world. Not as an end in itself – but as a way to deliver prosperity at home and promote our values and standards. More than 600,000 jobs in Europe are tied to trade with Japan. And our recent agreement with Vietnam alone helped secure historic labour rights for millions of workers in the country. We will use our diplomatic strength and economic clout to broker agreements that make a difference – such as designating maritime protected areas in the Antarctica. This would be one of the biggest acts of environmental protection in history. We will form high ambition coalitions on issues such as digital ethics or fighting deforestation – and develop partnerships with all like-minded partners – from Asian democracies to Australia, Africa, the Americas and anyone else who wants to join. We will work for just globalisation. But we cannot take this for granted. We must insist on fairness and a level playing field. And Europe will move forward – alone or with partners that want to join.</i> | VDL | 2020 | Global Europe | functional |
| <i>Dumping wages destroys the dignity of work, penalises the entrepreneur who pays decent wages and distorts fair competition in the Single Market. This is why the Commission will put forward a legal proposal to support Member States to set up a framework for minimum wages. Everyone must have access to minimum wages either through collective agreements or through statutory minimum wages. I am a strong advocate of collective bargaining and the proposal will fully respect national competencies and traditions. We have seen in many Member States how a well-negotiated minimum wage secures jobs and creates fairness – both for workers and for the companies who really value them. Minimum wages work – and it is time that work paid.</i> | VDL | 2020 | Social Europe | functional |
| <i>This is the world we want to live in. Where we are united in diversity and adversity. Where we work together to overcome our differences – and pull each other through when times are hard. Where we build today the healthier, stronger and more respectful world we want our children to live in tomorrow. But while we try to teach our children about life, our children are busy teaching us what life is about. The last year has shown us just how true this really is. We could speak of the millions of young people asking for change for a better planet. Or of the hundreds of thousands of beautiful rainbows of solidarity posted in the windows of Europe by our children. But there is one image that stuck in my mind from the last six difficult months. An image that captures the world</i> | VDL | 2020 | Stronger together | foundational |

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| <p><i>through the eyes of our children. It is the image of Carola and Vittoria. The two young girls playing tennis between the rooftops of Liguria, Italy. It is not just the courage and talent of the girls that sticks out. It is the lesson behind it. About not allowing obstacles stand in your way, about not letting conventions hold you back, about seizing the moment. This is what Carola, Vittoria and all the young people of Europe teach us about life every day. It is what Europe's next generation is all about. This is NextGenerationEU. This year, Europe took a leaf out of their book and took a leap forward together. When we had to find a way forward for our future, we did not allow old conventions hold us back. When we felt fragility around us, we seized the moment to breathe new vitality into our Union. When we had a choice to go it alone like we have done in the past, we used the combined strength of the 27 to give all 27 a chance for the future. We showed that we are in this together and we will get out of this together.</i></p> | | | | |
| <p><i>Honourable Members, Imagine for a moment life in this pandemic without digital in our lives. From staying in quarantine – isolated from family and community and cut off from the world of work – to major supply problems. It is in fact not so hard to imagine that this was the case 100 years ago during the last major pandemic. A century later, modern technology has allowed young people to learn remotely and millions to work from home. They enabled companies to sell their products, factories to keep running and government to deliver crucial public services from afar. We saw years' worth of digital innovation and transformation in the space of a few weeks. We are reaching the limits of the things we can do in an analogue way. And this great acceleration is just beginning. We must make this Europe's Digital Decade. We need a common plan for digital Europe with clearly defined goals for 2030, such as for connectivity, skills and digital public services. And we need to follow clear principles: the right to privacy and connectivity, freedom of speech, free flow of data and cybersecurity. But Europe must now lead the way on digital – or it will have to follow the way of others, who are setting these standards for us. This is why we must move fast.</i></p> | VDL | 2020 | Digital Europe | functional |