



EVENT: European Sentiment Compass launch, Tuesday 23 September 2025
- Spoken word prevails

Dear Colleagues,
Dear friends from the European Cultural Foundation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am thankful to be with you at the launch of the European Sentiment Compass 2025. The compass gives us a view into the predominant European mood and thus gives us an idea what topics to work on or where we need to communicate better.

We are gathered here at a time when Europe is once again being tested. Tested by wars at our borders, tested by storms in global geopolitics, tested by an erosion of trust in democracy and by cultural divisions that play out not only on our streets but also on our screens.

And while the world may currently be shaped by the political winds of Donald Trump and others like him, our message today must be clear: Europe stands firm. Europe is a reliable partner. And Europe is stronger when it acts with self-confidence, unity, and pride in its values.

Standing here in the House of European History, we are reminded that our continent has always been shaped by both triumphs and trials. These walls tell the story of wars and reconciliations, of revolutions and renewals, of the courage to start again and to build something greater together.

Europe's journey is not only written in treaties and institutions, but in the lives of millions who believed that peace and cooperation were worth striving for.

It is in this spirit that we look to the future - aware of our past, proud of what we have achieved, and determined to carry our values forward in today's turbulent world.

Europe's Role and Values

For decades, Europe has worked side by side with partners around the world, above all the United States. That cooperation has brought us stability, prosperity, and



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innovation. But today - with changing realities - Europe has to take the next step: to stand more firmly on its own feet, to invest in its security, its digital future, and its cultural confidence.

Europe must recognize that we are not just a junior partner. We are a continent of innovation, of peacebuilding, of democratic traditions that go back centuries.

We are home to 450 million citizens who still believe in the values of freedom, dignity, and solidarity.

Our role in the world is not to mirror others but to lead by example. To show that democracy can be resilient, that open societies can be strong, and that cooperation can be more powerful than confrontation.

Why a Strong European Sentiment is Needed

In times of war, in times of geopolitical turmoil, when democracy itself is under attack, it is easy to retreat into nationalism and fear. But the answer is not less Europe. The answer is more.

We need a stronger European sentiment, a sense that together, we are more than the sum of our parts.

That together, we can defend Ukraine, deter aggressors, and uphold the global rules we helped to shape. That together, we can invest in secure energy, in modern defence, in cutting-edge research, and in a shared digital future.

And this must be reflected in our budget. A future EU budget must also be a budget that invests in independence - independence from technological monopolies, independence from external security guarantees. This is what sovereignty in the 21st century looks like.

Europe as a Global Player

If Europe wants to step up its game on the global stage, we must be decisive. We



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cannot wait for Washington, Beijing or Moscow to set the tone. Yes, we remain close partners of the United States. Yes, our transatlantic bond is irreplaceable. But we cannot confuse partnership with dependency. The world respects those who respect themselves. And Europe must learn to speak with one voice - to project confidence, to defend its interests, and to stand up when our values are at stake.

Responding to the Culture Wars

But the threats we face are not only military or economic. They are also cultural and digital. Increasingly, we live in an online world where debates turn hostile, where polarization replaces dialogue, and where trust in democracy is corroded.

We see in the United States how culture wars can divide entire societies. Only one opinion is tolerated; dissent is punished.

The recent cancellation of Jimmy Kimmel's show is a vivid example: when even humour becomes politicized, freedom is hollowed out.

And let us be clear: this culture war does not stop at the Atlantic. It seeps into Europe through the big social media platforms we all use.

Our answer must be rooted in our values. Everyone has the right to free speech, but that right ends when it violates the rights and dignity of others. Europe must insist on a digital sphere that protects both freedom and responsibility.

We must invest in European platforms, in media literacy, in rules that prevent manipulation and disinformation and we must ensure that our rules - namely DSA and DMA - are upheld.

We should not allow ourselves to be divided - neither by external propaganda, nor by imported culture wars.



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Conclusion

Europe is a reliable partner, but Europe must also be a stronger, prouder, and more independent one. Our budget, our policies, and our public debates must reflect that.

The challenges we face are real: war, authoritarian powers, cultural polarization, digital manipulation. But the answer is not retreat. The answer is to stand taller, to be more decisive, to embrace more Europe, not less.

Because only united, only confident, only true to our values can Europe continue to be what the world needs: a partner for peace, a defender of democracy, and a beacon of hope in troubled times.

Thank you.