



**REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA
KABINET PREDSEDNIKA VLADE**

Gregorčičeva ulica 20, 25, 1000 Ljubljana

T: 01 478 17 67

F: 01 478 17 21

E: soj.kpv@gov.si

www.kpv.gov.si

CHECK UPON DELIVERY

**PRIME MINISTER ALENKA BRATUŠEK SPEECH
AT THE 2ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON FORMS OF IMAGINATION AND THINKING FOR
EUROPE**

Milan, 9 December 2014

Dear Prime Minister Letta and President Barroso,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to address such an important assembly today. I will not speak about structural reforms, the economic and monetary union, the banking union, the European Semester. This is our everyday business, be it in Ljubljana, Rome or in Brussels.

Although I do not want to underestimate the importance of debates on the future of economic and monetary union, I want to take five minutes and speak about the real things that matter most to us and to our fellow citizens.

Drafting a New Narrative for Europe means we are re-creating the moment in which the idea of European community was created. Its founding fathers wanted to build a better Europe. Because they knew the war was not an answer. They dared to translate their dreams into reality. Peace became an absolute objective, cooperation a daily mission.

Today, stepping into their shoes seems a very difficult task. Changes are part of our everyday life. We are faced with fatigue, be it in relation to closer cooperation or to the enlargement of the EU. People feel more and more

detached from Europe. We are facing the absence of a proper debate on policy issues. We fear our community will suddenly become something nobody really identifies with - estranged from our minds and hearts. We fear euro scepticism on the wings of popular rhetoric.

Therefore we have to join efforts in building a new narrative. We, politicians, cannot do it alone. We must engage with a vibrant society - with you, writers, thinkers, scientists and intellectual circles. We must build together a common European story.

In my country, we draw inspiration from our writer Boris Pahor, a great Slovenian and a great European. He was, amongst others, awarded the European citizen's price this year. On celebrating his 100 anniversary, he was not only described as a gifted writer but also as a man whose spirit is always on the alert, always ready for debate, attentive and sharp.

And that is how we should be. With the help of the Commission and Slovenian centre of non-governmental organisations, my government decided to launch a discussion on the future of Europe. We discuss important European issues with Slovenian citizens, civil society, business community and expert circles. The project is titled "More Europe – more Slovenia", because we firmly believe that Slovenia's future lies in a more integrated European Union.

Let me share with you some views of my fellow citizens which were expressed during the project.

One of our first round tables was about the future Economic and Monetary Union. To our surprise, active citizens were saying to us that issues were too complicated for them and difficult to understand. We realised we should improve our narrative. We should involve citizens in the debates at the start of the legislative process.

Youth was another priority area we decided to discuss. We do not want to see young people as a lost generation but as a promise of our future. I have

personally participated in the discussions and it was interesting to hear from them that – apart from the obvious crucial problem of the growing unemployment – they expressed the problem of mobility as one of their main concerns. And I can only agree with them. Mobility is the most reliable guarantee of creating a new European identity.

Our people were hit hard by the financial crisis. The social consequences of the ongoing structural reforms and fiscal consolidation left them exhausted. They fear that solidarity is disappearing. Our citizens demand the preservation of the European social model. I would like to quote one of them in saying that we need "to stop the dissolution of social protection and public health care, to find a balance between the economic and social dimension of development that will ensure human dignity."

From our citizens we got another strong message, which should be taken quite seriously by us politicians and institutions. It concerns the lack of trust in political parties and representative democracy, at the national and EU level. Despite national differences, we hear similar demands in the streets of many European countries. Active citizenship is one of the positive collateral results of the present developments. The governments should and must find synergy with awakened EU citizens.

We want our debates to feed into the process of the EU elections. They represent a litmus test for our common future. We should join efforts and challenge the myths put forward by anti-European movements.

We should focus on subjects that appear to be granted and are therefore often forgotten: fundamental values of democracy, human rights, rule of law, solidarity, ethics, freedom, and culture in all its forms. It is time to get back to the fundamental values upon which our community is based. These values should not become marginalised because they are not recognised. The debate on these issues can give more sense to our efforts and should be recognized as relevant factors for the exit from the present crisis.

We should not give up the European project because of the present difficulties; we should look forward, always anew reviving the spirit of the founding fathers of the EU.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to conclude with the visionary words of one of them, Jean Monnet:
“When we decided upon the goal that we want to reach, we must act without making assumptions about the risks of not achieving it. As long as you didn’t try it, you can’t say that nothing is impossible.”

I can only add that my Government is a living proof of that. As we say in Slovenia, when men can’t solve problems, it’s time for women to take the lead.

Thank you for your attention.