

Speech by President Donald Tusk at the EPP congress in Zagreb

I would like to begin with a few words of thanks. First and foremost, let me thank all-the-delegates and participants of our congress for their great work, courage and determination, which you have demonstrated throughout this year, since our meeting in Helsinki. Despite the current trends, negative predictions, and efforts by our opponents, we again won the elections to the European Parliament. And don't let anyone tell you, that those who won, are losers, which is, what our competitors and, unfortunately, our malcontents, like to repeat. It could have been better – someone may say. My dear friends, it can always be better, and this is why we are here today, but nobody will stop us from feeling proud and from walking with our heads held high!

I would also like to thank our President for the six years of leading our family through really tough times. Dear Joseph, it will be very difficult to replace you, you did an excellent job. You gave us all a feeling of safety and a meaning to our actions. You were a true leader of our community.

Let me also thank you for your trust. It was you, who more than a year ago, came to me with the suggestion that I become your successor, and you took such good care of this idea that I am the only candidate. This is another example of your extraordinary effectiveness, Joseph, thank you. And so, here I am, at your disposal.

Yes, it is true that I am a little younger than Joseph, but let's not pretend that my candidacy is a generational revolution. After all, I've been with you for more than twenty-five years. You know my good and bad sides. So there's no need to bore you with introducing myself. You also know that I am usually brief, to the point, and frank, perhaps sometimes too frank, but I cannot act any other way, and I don't intend to. Since I am the only candidate, I will not pretend to be leading an election campaign, which would force me to present opinions on every subject and answer precisely to every expectation from a long wishlist. So please allow me today, to focus on only one, and in my opinion, most important challenge for our political family.

Until recently, many of us thought, that with the rise of modernity, such needs as security and identity would lose their significance. And, that as a consequence, the role and tasks of the state and public authority would also change.

But the reality turned out to be quite different. Today, even more than in the past, it is fear that plays the biggest role in politics. Most people still care more about their safety than about anything else. For example in such moments as the migration crisis and a new wave of terrorism, it is fear which dominates over other social emotions. "Give us a sense of safety and security!" – this is what we have been hearing in Europe in the last years, and whoever can best respond to this call, gets the support of the public.

In times of uncertainty, and most probably there will be no other times, when everything changes around us, and runs off in all directions, people want to be certain, that those in power will not abandon them, that they will not turn their backs on them. When left alone, they start looking for those, who offer care and concentration on their problems. They desire attention. "Look at us" – they seem to say – "we are here". They, or should I say, we all are hungry for appreciation, dignity and importance, and we all feel the need to be part of a bigger community. And to be proud of it. This is why it is so easy to win people's hearts by those who shout in a loud voice: "get up off your knees, make your country great again, take back control". In other words, those who strike the right chord, the chord of dignity, will get people's votes.

As always, people have a need for order, harmony, and understanding the world around them. That is why we all need to be deeply rooted in our traditions, understandable cultural codes, and in places we call ours. And which are somehow distinctive from others.

As I have already said, people also want to be part of a bigger community with which they know how to identify. Through language, religion, or a common understanding of history. And most often, it is still a nation that is such a community. Whoever rejects from his political vocabulary and axiology terms such as: homeland, Heimat, domovina, patria, ojczyzna, will find that it is very difficult to face up to the crucial task, that of giving people this sense of safety and security.

Under no condition can we abdicate from this task. It is in fact encoded in the genes of Christian Democracy. And it is not a coincidence that one of the most important Christian Democratic schools of thought was the so-called Ordoliberalism, which built a difficult but possible synthesis of freedom, order and tradition.

I deeply believe that only those who want and are able to give people a feeling of safety and security, preserving at the same time their freedoms and rights, have a mandate to run for power. Under no circumstances can we give away the sphere of security and order to political populists, manipulators and autocrats, who lead people to believe that freedom cannot be reconciled with security. That protecting our borders and territory cannot be reconciled with liberal democracy, and an effective governance with the rule of law.

This is the essence of our internal debate within the European People's Party. I would like us to end it as quickly as possible with an obvious conclusion. We will not sacrifice values like civic liberties, the rule of law, and decency in a public life on the altar of security and order, because there is simply no need. Because they don't exclude one another. Whoever is unable to accept it, is *de facto* placing himself outside our family.

Ok. This is where I will stop. The last thing I want to do is to bore you. Especially that one of the greatest threats we face is our routine, Newspeak, lack of emotions and boredom. Some time ago, Bono, the famous leader of U2, visited me in Brussels. At some point he said that we would lose if our

narrative was not as melodramatic as that of the populists. Let us remember that in politics, impressions are sometimes more important than facts. Look at the migration crisis. I remember when some worked really hard for many days and weeks to contain the wave of illegal migrants from Turkey, negotiating for hours, hundreds of hours, our agreement with Ankara, thanks to which, the influx of migrants fell by more than 90 per cent. I don't have to remind anyone of the great role Angela (Merkel) played here. However someone else took care of impressions. Someone, who also worked hard, but only on his narrative and self-creation, putting up a fence and billboards with anti-migration propaganda.

We must put a stop to this. In a political fight, truth and decency cannot be completely helpless against fake news, manipulation and hate. You must believe in yourselves and the power of your arguments. Do not be afraid to say in public what you really feel (even if you may sometimes think it's a dangerous experiment), and you will surely evoke people's emotions and capture their attention.

Because you know, we are sometimes terribly boring in our communication, aren't we? But we don't have to.

A few weeks ago I visited Pope Francis. I told him that I would stand as a candidate for the President of the European People's Party. He gave me a long look and asked if we would be able to distinguish between *populismo* and *popolarismo*. I think you know well what he had in mind. If not, please read some of Pope Francis' writings, you are Christian Democrats after all.

As you know, we have a party among us called Partido Popular. I know that not every party may be called *popular*, but every party in our family can be popular. So let us all stand together on this most important political battlefield, on one side parties of irresponsible populism, on the other, our party of responsible popularity. After five years I am fed up with being the European Bureaucrat-in-Chief. I am ready to fight. And I hope you are, too.