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“Europe that would give in to demands of antiEuropean forces would not be a real Europe.”

The Spinelli Group Caucus meeting

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We are meeting at a crucial moment in the history of Europe. The Citizens see it. I do not know whether all politicians do see it as well. We badly need the prodding from citizens to push us forward in our thinking and acting for the future and to feel this sense of urgency.

What we are facing are not series of separate, self-contained challenges.

We are actually facing a historical choice between two Europes.

Those of you who followed two days ago the debate on rule of law in the European Parliament certainly know what I am talking about.

One is a forward-looking Europe, open to cooperation and looking together for solutions to pressing, multifaceted problems, some of them directly related to our survival on this planet, other to the quality of our public sphere, so that it is not polluted by disinformation and fake news, Europe that cares about the citizens and is able to listen to them and hear them. This is, in short, the "Spinelli" Europe.

But there is the other Europe, which wants to go back to some imaginary past of closed national boundaries, Europe suspicious of the ever closer integration, of Europe open to interactions with the rest of the world, without complexes, oriented toward future. Fortunately I do not see this nostalgia yet during the debates in the Conference.

We, as Spinelli Group, do not have any doubts as to which Europe we belong. And this is good news. Still I am worrying that we might be again in the famous pro-European bubble. There are, however, out there our European co-citizens who are probably not so sure about what Europe they want. Maybe their courage and good sense takes them into our direction, but their embedded sentiments make them sometimes susceptible to the siren calls of the populists who want to take them to their playground.

We should use this time, now, to reach out to them, to convince them that Europe cannot be imagined otherwise than as modern democratic construct, and not some archaic, blood and soil fantasy of the populist imagination.

We should continue to make efforts individually, but also as Spinelli community, as Federalists - we have many meetings across Europe now – to expand our presence in public debates beyond the Conference.

We should be clear and loud that “Europe” that would give in to demands of anti-European forces would not be a real Europe. Europe of populists, anti-integrationists, Europe-deniers of various sorts would not be a real Europe that we need and care for.

To overcome the anti-European sentiment and push out the proponents of the fake European ideas we need a vibrant, lively public sphere.

It is for us a chance to exploit – to use the Conference as a vehicle to open more public space for those who are not directly involved in the Conference.

And because of that I welcome especially one point from our Spinelli Manifesto about the importance of public sphere “The creation of a European public sphere will be of key importance in this regard. Efforts by both public broadcasters and private initiative to create pan-European media platforms that share audio-visual content and enable transnational discourse should be encouraged. Such efforts should receive European co-financing and additional support for multilingualism.” COFE is our chance to help building the pan-European public sphere and we cannot miss this opportunity.