



Bundespräsident  
Alexander Van der Bellen

## Joint Call for Europe ahead of the European elections in May 2019

**Europe is the best idea we have ever had.**

European integration has helped to realise a centuries-old hope for peace in Europe after unbridled nationalism and other extreme ideologies led Europe to the barbarity of two world wars. To this day, we cannot and should not take peace and freedom, prosperity and well-being for granted. It is necessary that we all engage actively for the great idea of a peaceful and integrated Europe.

The 2019 elections are of special importance: It is you, the European citizens who decide which path the European Union shall follow. We, the Heads of State of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland therefore call on all European citizens who are entitled to vote to take part in the elections to the European Parliament at the end of May 2019.

The peoples of Europe have united out of their own free will in the European Union, which is founded on the principles of liberty, equality, solidarity, democracy, justice and loyalty within and between its members. A Union which is unprecedented in the history of Europe. In our European Union, the elected Members of the European Parliament, along with the Council of the European Union, that is, the Governments of all Member States, decide which rules should apply in Europe and how Europe's budget should be spent.

**We are all Europeans.**

For many people in Europe, particularly among the young generation, their European citizenship has become second nature to them. It is not a contradiction for them to love their village, town, region or nation *and* to be committed Europeans.

**Our Europe is able to meet challenges together.**

In these months, more than ever before, the European Union is facing profound challenges. For the first time since European integration began, people are talking about rolling back one or more integration steps, such as freedom of movement or abolishing joint institutions. For the first time



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a Member State intends to leave the Union. At the same time, others call for more integration in the EU or the Eurozone or for a multi-speed Europe.

Views on these matters differ among the citizens and governments of the Member States, as well as between us Heads of State. However, we all agree that European integration and unity is essential and that we want to continue Europe as a Union. Only a strong community will be able to face up to the global challenges of our time. The effects of climate change, terrorism, economic globalisation, and migration do not stop at national borders. We will only meet these challenges successfully and continue on the road to economic and social cohesion and development by working together as equal partners at the institutional level.

**We want a strong and integrated Europe.**

We thus need a strong European Union, a Union that has joint institutions, a Union that constantly reviews its work with a critical eye and is able to reform itself, a Union that is built on its citizens and on its Member States as a vital base.

This Europe needs a vibrant political debate on the best path forward into the future starting from the Rome Declaration of 25<sup>th</sup> March 2017 as a basis. Europe is able to withstand a very wide range of opinions and ideas. But there definitely must not be a return to a Europe in which countries are no longer equal partners but opponents.

Our united Europe needs a strong vote by the peoples. This is why we call on you to exercise your right to vote. It is our common European future that is on the ballot.

**Rumen Radev**

President of the Republic of Bulgaria

**Miloš Zeman**

President of the Czech Republic

**Frank-Walter Steinmeier**

President of the Federal Republic of Germany

**Kersti Kaljulaid**

President of the Republic of Estonia



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**Michael D. Higgins**  
President of Ireland

**Prokopios Pavlopoulos**  
President of the Hellenic Republic

**Emmanuel Macron**  
President of the French Republic

**Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović**  
President of the Republic of Croatia

**Sergio Mattarella**  
President of the Italian Republic

**Nicos Anastasiades**  
President of the Republic of Cyprus

**Raimonds Vējonis**  
President of the Republic Latvia

**Dalia Grybauskaitė**  
President of the Republic of Lithuania

**János Áder**  
President of the Republic of Hungary

**George Vella**  
President of the Republic of Malta

**Alexander Van der Bellen**  
President of the Republic of Austria

**Andrzej Duda**  
President of the Republic of Poland



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**Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa**  
President of the Portuguese Republic

**Klaus Iohannis**  
President of Romania

**Borut Pahor**  
President of the Republic Slovenia

**Andrej Kiska**  
President of the Slovak Republic

**Sauli Niinistö**  
President of the Republic of Finland