

## Emmanuel Macron to EU Parliament: 'We need a European sovereignty'

Written by Martin Banks and Julie Levy-Abegnoli on 17 April 2018 in News  
News

French President Emmanuel Macron was in plenary on Tuesday to debate the future of Europe with MEPs.



Emmanuel Macron | *Photo credit: European Parliament audiovisual*

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Addressing the Strasbourg chamber, Macron said, “The European Parliament is, in my eyes, the seat of Europe’s legitimacy, its responsibility and hence its vitality. It is here that part of Europe’s future is being played out.”

He added, “To cope with upheavals worldwide, we need a sovereignty that is greater than our own, but which complements it: a European sovereignty.”

In his speech, Macron made a robust defence of the EU, but warned of several pressing challenges, ranging from climate change to trade policy.

He said, "I don't want to belong to a generation of sleepwalkers. We cannot just carry on as though this was any old debate.

"We are seeing authoritarianism all around us," Macron said, "The response is not authoritarian democracy but the authority of democracy.

"In these difficult times, European democracy is our best chance," he added, before warning against the "deadly tendency" of national selfishness and egotism that could lead the continent "to the abyss".

Addressing deputies in his native French, he spoke of the EU as a "European miracle, a unique model in the world which we must keep alive.

"It is not dated or abstract but one that is committed to protecting health and the climate."

He also attacked those who "stoke up" criticism of the EU, saying, "People have not given up on Europe but we must listen to the anger of the public."

He spoke of the citizen consultation exercises he has launched in France, saying, "We need a critical debate about Europe and I welcome the fact that all member states have agreed to join in with this. It is an essential debate. What keeps us together is a feeling of belonging."

Parliament's EPP group Chair, Manfred Weber, welcomed the speech, saying, "The European Parliament is the place to discuss and decide the future of Europe. The Franco-German axis is important, but Europe is much more."

He added, "True democracy is not only listening to people, democracy is letting people decide. If Europe ignores the people, the people will ignore Europe. This is why the European Parliament should elect and control a European government. Every European Commissioner has to convince people by running for the European parliamentary elections."

However, other groups were more critical of Macron. Udo Bullmann, leader of Parliament's S&D group, said, "It is not enough to play Ode to Joy and walk on red carpets chanting the hymn. No, the European rebirth must happen through concrete political action serving the people, based on joint, responsible and above all European actions.

"We Socialists and Democrats welcome your enthusiasm and passion for Europe. We would like to see more leaders with your commitment. But, Monsieur le Président - words are not enough. Words must become concrete action.

"You say you want to 'protect European citizens'. So why do you block the proposal for a directive on work-life balance in the Council, which allows mothers to come back to the workplace?

"The financial transaction tax, which was ready for implementation by member states, was not implemented either, due to the resistance of the French government. Finally, on refugees, I am not sure that the way this is being dealt with in France, respects European decency and the dignity of the French nation."

Macron also came under fire from Greens/EFA group co-leader Philippe Lamberts, who said, "While President Macron has talked a good game, his actions have often told a different story. He has

stripped his own citizens of fundamental rights and failed to protect those desperately seeking sanctuary in his country. The President's tax giveaways may have found him favour with the rich, but he has not shown the same concern for those struggling to get by."

In his set-piece speech, the French President made only one reference to Brexit, but he later spoke more about the issue after a question from UK Tory MEP Geoffrey Van Orden, who called on Macron to send a "strong signal" that he supports "the strongest possible arrangement" with the UK, post-Brexit."

In response, Macron told the MEP that was "in favour of most integrated and closest possible relationship with the UK" after it leaves the EU, but added, "It already exists - it's called EU membership."

He also warned, "EU membership provides the most perfect access to the single market and, while I am very fond of our relationship with the UK, there can be no cherry picking. I believe in the EU and what we have done. Full access to the single market means accepting full responsibilities and we must be consistent on this."

Macron was referring to the EU's insistence that Britain's Brexit red lines would limit the UK-EU relationship to a trade deal rather than full access to the single market.

He also said, "A lot of people are putting forward proposals and 'what if' scenarios, but they do not explain what happens the day after Brexit."

With the EU set to unveil its progress reports on the accession prospects of six western Balkans countries, he said, "We should not say the EU club is closed. Had we said that before, some of you here today would not be here.

"We need to be pragmatic and make sure they are brought closer to Europe and not drift away to Russia or Turkey or simply collapse.

"We must give them prospects, but that said we can only do that once we have reformed Europe. We don't want a Europe of, say 32 or so members, with the same rules."

After addressing MEPs during the plenary session, Macron was given a 30-second standing ovation and embraced by Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

## **About the author**

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