

Introduction and context

Coal and steel. That was how it all started. With that, and Robert Schuman's Declaration on 9 May 1950, exactly 70 years ago today. Schuman was born here in Luxembourg. He is regarded as one of the founding fathers of Europe as we know it today. In 1952, Belgium, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy and Luxembourg founded the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), as proposed in the Schuman plan. This not only guaranteed peace between those countries but also, crucially, laid the foundations for what subsequently became the European Union.

In 1957, the same six countries created an economic community which became later known as the European Community (EC). More and more countries joined. Then in 1993, when the Maastricht Treaty came into force, the European Union (EU) was born. Today, just a little more than 500 million people call the EU home.

And then there was Schengen. Thanks to the agreement signed there on 14 June 1985, 35 years ago, the little winegrowing village in the tri-border region became world-famous. Schengen stands for the free movement of goods and people. Schengen is a milestone for everyone who lives in this area, because Schengen stands for a Europe with open borders. And for friendship.

It is this Europe that has been dealt a severe blow in recent weeks, because some countries suddenly decided that charity begins at home. Nobody in their wildest dreams could ever have imagined that a whole series of nation states would erect barriers again and carry out checks that make passing from one country to another difficult or even impossible.

Declaration on 9 May 2020

For a Europe with open borders

Europe united what belongs together. Europe stands for working together and living together. No one should have the right to block people and their lifestyles by imposing borders.

Europe stands for hundreds of joint actions and projects that are organised at communal, local or regional level. Europe stands for friendships and partnerships that extend far beyond the borders of the countries concerned. So why should all that now be suspended and therefore jeopardised in the fight against the spread of a virus?

Travelling without border controls. Feeling safe and trusting other people. Being European means living without war for 75 years, and with innumerable freedoms, acquired gains and rights. All of this is based on economic and political stability. And on the solidarity between our peoples that has become the norm between good neighbours.

Above all, however, Europe is a Europe of its citizens – regardless of whether they live on one side or on the other side of national borders. Europe is also a Europe of communes and towns, because that's where people live and feel at home.

Hence this declaration from Luxembourg's communes and towns, along with their umbrella organisation, SYVICOL (Association of Towns and Municipalities of Luxembourg).

Europe should remain what it is: a strong Union!

Like many other partnerships across the world, this union is being put to the test during this pandemic, but that doesn't mean it is at an end. After all, the forged bonds are too strong and the sense of solidarity too great.

On this day, 9 May 2020, Europe Day, exactly 70 years after the Schuman Declaration, the communes of Luxembourg, along with their neighbouring communes in Germany, Belgium and France, still hold the European idea in the highest esteem.

Hoisting the European flag is a symbolic gesture that sends a strong message.

We do it out of pride in a partnership that has so much to offer.

Therefore: for a Europe with open borders. The citizens of the Old Continent know and want no other kind of Europe!