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Published at: 18-03-2009

Source: [Portal Europe](#)

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EP 2009 Vote: Beyond the Sugar Cube

“If Europe were united in the sharing of its common inheritance there would be no limit to the happiness, prosperity and glory which its 300 million or 400 million people would enjoy.” Opening words taken from Winston Churchill’s famous speech held in Zurich in 1946. Shortly after, Europe started its most prestigious project ever: the voluntary economic and political co-operation of European countries.

But Europe has since then become the victim of its own success. Sixty years after its creation the Union is not longer seen as a common tool for longstanding peace, but rather known for it being the biggest consumer market. Economic integration, intended as a solid basis for political integration, has become the primary trigger for success. However, the recent financial crisis has shown that political commitment is insurmountable for any common market. Challenges for the future are not few for an ever-expanding EU with a declining economy: turbulent geo-political situations at its outside borders and an ever postponed debate on its energy supply, to name a few.

The future is in the hands of the European Parliament, of the European citizens. It shall decide whether Europe will choose for the future, for the younger generations, by taking the lead in the challenges we are facing. A Europe based on common values and the belief that it is possible to work for a better society with solidarity among all Europeans.

Trade has altered all discussions over the last decade and the Union has more and more watered down towards a free trade association of rich western countries. But European citizens feel Europe is about more than just economics, it is about culture, common values and a shared inheritance.

2009 should be the year that Europe will strengthen its ambitions. Not primarily by changing its institutions but by changing its mindset. The year European leaders will convince us that all is possible as long as we believe in it – as long as we go for it. Together we are strong.