

Sperrfrist Redebeginn

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort



**Verleihung des  
Internationalen Karlspreises zu Aachen 2013**

**an die  
Präsidentin der Republik Litauen**

**Dr. Dalia Grybauskaitė**

**Dankesrede  
von Dr. Dalia Grybauskaitė**

**englisch**

# Speech by the President of the Republic of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė

## The award ceremony of the International Charlemagne Prize

City of Aachen, 9 May, 2013

Vielen Dank der Stadt Aachen fuer den Preis, der komplizierte Geschichte and stolze Gegenwart meines Landes erkennt und uns zusammen zwingt, die gemeinsame Zukunft Europa's zu gestallten.

I would like to thank the President of the European Parliament, Martin Shultz, for his kind words and to express my strong belief that the role of the European Parliament in developing the vision and daily life of Europe is very special and important.

The German city of Aachen was the center of the realm Charlemagne created. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, Europe was torn apart, full of chaos and deep in the dark ages. Charlemagne's efforts to unify Europe contributed to the development of the continent and its common future. Later on there would be many more such attempts, but always by force. The European Union is the first effort to unite Europe by free-will.

Free will means taking responsibility and building your future with your own hands.

When the founding fathers of Europe – Schuman, Monnet, Adenauer, and others – started creating the Coal and Steel Community, they had to step over conflicts, differences and ambitions across national borders. Their decision was an act of powerful political will. European leaders of that time were united in their understanding that they had to take responsibility and act immediately without delaying important decisions.

**This responsibility to act is at the core of the whole European project.**

It is like a tree that gives life to many branches, such as responsible finances, social, environmental, energy and trade policies, as well as solidarity and deeper European integration.

The key lesson that we have to learn from the architects of Europe and all those who invested into making the European Union successful is that today more than ever Europe

**needs political will to make responsible decisions.** No challenge can be addressed without assuming responsibility. This goes for all, leaders and ordinary Europeans alike.

It was not so long ago that we Lithuanians had to fight for our right independence, freedom and a future of our own. The people of Lithuania know very well that the European Union is “not a given thing”. One has to fight for it and for a place in it. And it takes dedication to stand up for the Union as a lifetime vision and as everyday reality. Twenty three years ago Lithuanians demonstrated the strongest possible political will. This is the kind of political will that we, Europeans, need now.

**Today’s Europe requires responsible fiscal policy.** Its essence is very simple: to live within our means. Yes, such decisions are very difficult, and yes, they are sometimes painful. Balancing the budget, managing public debt and inflation – it all sounds very technical, but if these measures are not in place, we will continue deceiving ourselves that life is good – when actually only the statistics will be.

To restore Lithuania’s financial health, we had to introduce strict austerity measures: cuts in public expenditure, reduction of tax benefits and exemptions, and other elements. The people of Lithuania can tell how it feels to survive an almost 15 percent fall of the GDP. And this was the second severe economic crisis in just a decade.

But the Lithuanian people demonstrated understanding and patience.

We knew – **nobody can solve our problems but ourselves.** The result is obvious: this year the Lithuanian economy is among the fastest growing in Europe.

It is true that we cannot avoid future economic storms, but we can strengthen the immunity of our financial systems, minimizing the negative effects.

And yes, responsible behavior might not win elections, but it will ensure sustainable growth.

**Today Europe will not be able to continue without responsible social decisions.** Lithuania recovered from the global economic crisis not only by introducing financial discipline, but

also by reaching social consensus. We understood very well that agreements with social partners will bring about faster economic recovery and ensure national stability.

Fiscal policies cannot ignore the most vulnerable if people's trust is to be maintained. Today an entire generation – the young people – face difficulties in finding jobs. We must provide them with real opportunities to establish themselves, because it is they who will build the Europe of tomorrow. Ten or twenty years from now, they will stand at the helm of Europe.

We have to invest today so that disappointment does not become the guiding principle for Europe.

Therefore social and employment policies as well as structural reforms and stimulus packages have to go hand in hand. And Lithuania can tell that it works.

**Responsible decisions are needed in other sectors as well.** I will give just two examples. Common European action in energy or digital markets can contribute more strongly to economic growth and social well-being than it might seem at first glance.

Digital technologies will create around one million new jobs in the next two years.

Europe's common and responsible policy aimed at diversifying internal energy resources and external energy supplies would not only lower their price, but would also set the right balance between investments into the environment and energy. These are difficult decisions. But difficult decisions have made Europe what it is today.

**Today Europe must act together.** European action comes from solidarity. We can restore the trust of Europeans in Europe only by sharing the burden of the economic difficulties. However, solidarity means that we both make decisions together and act on them together.

Regrettably, more decisions are made today than implemented. And still we want more and more of them even though we do not know about the results delivered or about their added value to the people of Europe. But responsible European decisions that we need today do not mean that "Brussels will do all the work for us".

National policies, homework in solving structural economic or banking problems must first of all be the direct responsibility of politicians in member states. Because the work done at home – both hard and painful – is the contribution of each and everyone to European solidarity and effective common action.

Once again let me go back to political will. Without it there will be neither solidarity nor the desired results.

At this point I would like to highlight the significant contribution made by Germany and its people as they took on the leadership in search of the necessary decisions at European level. It is a historic role, a genuine example of responsible politics.

Today Germany plays the leading role in ensuring European stability and does not allow us to wander from the path of trust in Europe. That is why it is Germany which gets the strongest criticism – and also our deepest respect.

Common action based on responsibility has always brought about benefits. Common action is European strength. It is also the core of integration.

I strongly believe that we cannot have any doubts about the advantages of responsible integration. Here is the task for us, politicians and leaders: to overcome the fear of future through confidence that integration will offer more openings than obstructions.

Dear Europeans,

The world has already recognized the role of Europe in advancing peace, reconciliation, democracy, and human rights. We must take the responsibility to transform these values that we all share into a vision of tomorrow and a daily reality for our neighbors and partners. **It is responsibility by example** which is expected from us. We Europeans are a role model of learning, listening in, negotiating, and finding solutions together.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Once again in our history we stand at the crossroad of challenges. But Europe has always come up with proper solutions, advancing each time to a new qualitative level. We are at a point where the decisions made today are vital for our tomorrow. **So let us choose responsibility and let us not be afraid of making difficult decisions.** It is said that challenges might be way greater than us, but how we deal with them is what defines us.

Once again, thank you for this award. I accept it also as a commitment for all of us to assume responsibility as we shape the future of Europe together.

I would like to thank the President of the European Parliament, Martin Shultz, for his kind words and to express my strong belief that the role of the European Parliament in developing the vision and daily life of Europe is very special and important.

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**This responsibility to act is the core of the whole European project.**

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The key lesson that we have to learn from the architects of Europe and all those who invested into making the European Union successful is that today more than ever Europe **needs political will to make responsible decisions**. No challenge can be faced without assuming responsibility. This goes for all, leaders and ordinary Europeans alike.

It was not so long ago that we Lithuanians had to fight for our right to independence, freedom and a future of our own. The people of Lithuania know very well that the European Union is “not a given thing”. One has to fight for it and for a place in it. And it takes dedication to stand up for the Union as a lifetime vision and as everyday reality. Twenty three years ago it was the expression of the will demonstrated by the Lithuanian people and their leaders. Today we, Europeans, also call for strong political will.

**Today’s Europe needs responsible fiscal policy**. Its essence is very simple: to live within our means. Yes, such decisions are very difficult, and yes, they are sometimes painful for our citizens. Balancing the budget, managing public debt and inflation – it all sounds very technical, but if these measures are not in place, we will continue deceiving ourselves that life is good – when actually only the statistics will be.

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Thank you very much!