

Munich, 07 June 2024

Dear Markus,
dear Friedrich,
dear Manfred,
dear Edmund Stoiber and dear Theo Waigel,
Dear candidates for the European Parliament,

I would like to mention Monika Hohlmeier, whom I wish a speedy recovery.

Dear friends, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here in Munich. Here at the Löwenbräu, it's a real party. I was recently at the Bavarian representation in Brussels where we put up the maypole together. As it should be, with brass band music and a tapping of the barrel. The hospitality there is legendary among all European diplomats. The whole of Europe knows that if you're looking for heaven, the best place to go is the Bavarian cellar. As a Prussian, I not only appreciate this hospitality, but also the vigour with which we have fought the past few weeks.

I would like to start by saying thank you! Thank you for a brilliant election campaign. For the vigour of the past weeks. The CDU and CSU are by far the strongest forces in all polls. The EPP is the strongest force in all European polls.

Dear Manfred, it was a great election campaign that we ran together. We stood united. We fought together. Our issues are the right ones: Prosperity, security, democracy. That's great teamwork. And it was only possible because all of you out there are doing a great job. Thank you for that. That gives us a tailwind for the coming years. And we can all be proud of that. Thank you for this great work at the stands and to all the volunteers who do this for our Europe!

The other parties are all campaigning in their own way.

With the AfD, a new embarrassment comes out of the woodwork every week. First, we see raids on the AfD for bribery and money laundering by the Kremlin. The next thing we hear about the Bavarian top candidate is that he is apparently only registered at a bogus address in the constituency. Investigators are trawling through one bogus company after another. And then the employee of the other AfD top candidate is convicted of spying for China from the European Parliament. First the AfD rants and raves about the people and the fatherland and then it sells this fatherland to autocrats. Such people do not belong in the European Parliament, such people belong in front of the courts!

But first I would like to say a few words at the end of this election campaign to the heroes of the past few days. These are our emergency services in the flood areas. Whether professionals or volunteers, whether firefighters, THW or the Red Cross. I could name many other organisations and authorities. What they do is amazing. And my thanks also go to the thousands of spontaneous helpers. Whether they are preparing emergency shelters, making sandwiches for the emergency services, stacking sandbags or simply being there for those who have lost their homes in the floods. You are fantastic! This applause is for you.

Dear friends, as great as our emergency services are dealing with this flood – it would be better if they didn't have to. Some of you may remember the terrible floods in Passau in 2002. There was talk of a flood of the century. What we are now aware of, is that this figure was exceeded in the same year. Again in 2013. And now again. We live in times of climate change. That's why it's right that we as the Union are tackling the issue. In Bavaria, you can see how this works together with the economy. Bavaria is the German champion in the expansion of renewable energies. Bavaria is a leader in photovoltaics, bioenergy, hydropower and deep geothermal energy. For years, the Technical University of Munich has been by far the university in Germany that produces the most start-ups. And if Bavaria were a member state in its own right, it would be one of the 7 strongest economies in Europe.

Dear friends, Bavaria has been demonstrating for decades how tradition and the future – how economic growth and climate protection can go together. Open to technology. Pragmatic. More innovation. Less bureaucracy. We need more of this. Above all in Europe!

Dear friends, without us, the European People's Party, Europe would not be on course for climate neutrality in 2050. You Bavarians want to achieve climate neutrality even 10 years earlier, namely in 2040.

Without us, the EPP, we would not have a law to promote clean industries.

Without us, the EPP, there would be no dialogue with the agricultural sector in Europe on how we can combine climate targets and sustainable agriculture.

And we know that global warming is also destroying the nature that farmers need and that we all need. Glaciers and lakes, the Bavarian forest or the mountain pastures. If we lose this, it will not only rob people of their livelihoods, but also their sense of home.

I have 7 children and 4 grandchildren. And like all grandmothers, I do everything I can to make sure they are well. And that's why I know that these young people would never forgive us – and rightly so – if we shirked this task. And that is why for me, dear friends, protecting nature is not just a climate issue – it is also a question of intergenerational justice. We owe it to our children.

Dear friends, we want a Europe that not only benefits us, but also protects us. The threat to our freedom has not been so great for decades. The autocrat in the Kremlin has dropped all inhibitions in Ukraine. He is using every means at his disposal to intimidate his neighbours and Europe's democracies. Because we know that if Putin's cold calculation works in Ukraine, we will no longer be safe here in Europe. Anyone who talks and acts like Putin does not want peace. And nobody wants lasting peace in their own country more than the people of Ukraine.

We can never match the courage and determination of the Ukrainians. But what we can do is stand firmly by their side – today and tomorrow. Ukraine's freedom is our own security. That is why we need staying power. Even if it requires effort, even if it costs money. We must reinvest in freedom and peace. Because the price we would have to pay if Russia wiped out Ukraine would be many times higher. I know that some people cringe when we talk about 'war' and defence. We should be under no illusions. We have seen the autocrat's scheme in the Kremlin too often. He waits and then strikes again.

Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and the battered Ukraine... They have all experienced this. And let's not fool ourselves – it's no coincidence that migrants from Yemen suddenly appear in Finnish border forests, that satellite communications over the Baltic Sea fail, that border buoys in Narva between Estonia and Russia disappear overnight. The massive cyber-attacks ... Putin provokes and tests wherever he can. If we want to preserve peace on our continent, we must not hesitate.

Europe must invest more money in defence. That is also in the interests of NATO. We must invest more wisely together. And above all, we must invest in the defence industry in Europe. That is why we are in favour of a European defence union. And that is why I will appoint a Commissioner for Defence in the next mandate. We want a Europe that can defend itself.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, when we talk about security, we also have to talk about migration. I don't know if you feel the same way. But I can't get the images of the attack on the police officer in Mannheim out of my head. A young man in uniform who was stabbed in the head while trying to protect another person. The young policeman is a hero to whom we bow our heads. The perpetrator and all those who celebrate his heinous act on social media must feel the full force of the law.

Their behaviour goes against all the values we believe in and stand for as a Union. Human decency, respect for law and order, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence.

Serious criminals must know that their right to protection has limits. Then the right to safety of all those who live together peacefully here takes precedence. And there must be a way to bring the offenders back to their countries of origin.

In April, we adopted the Pact on Migration and Asylum in the European Parliament. With this pact, we are further strengthening Europe's external borders. We are ensuring faster and simpler procedures. And we are combating the organised crime of smugglers and traffickers. This is a business worth billions. To put it bluntly: we have fulfilled our international obligations in the past, we are fulfilling them today and we will continue to do so in the future. But it is we, the Europeans, who decide who comes to Europe and under what circumstances. We decide that, not the smugglers and traffickers.

That's why I travelled to Tunisia, Mauritania, and Egypt. And I recently travelled to Lebanon. I am interested in pragmatic agreements and concrete steps. For example, when it comes to investing in clean energy that creates jobs. Or when it comes to education for the younger generation. On the one hand, it's about legal and secure paths for those who want to work here, who are looking for our companies and who have prospects of staying. But on the other hand, it is also about people returning who are not entitled to asylum in our country. There is a huge problem here that has to change. Not only because our local authorities are on the verge of being overwhelmed. But also because it is our concern to preserve Europe's openness to the world. But to achieve this, there must also be common rules. And that is what we, the Christian Democrats, stand for in this election.

Dear friends, the third topic, which is about preserving what we hold dear, is our democracy. Today's Europe is a great gift. Adenauer, Schumann and de Gasperi, who shook hands. Helmut Kohl and Theo Waigel helped to unite Europe. Angela Merkel and Wolfgang Schäuble held Europe together when the financial crisis was at its peak.

Today we are once again at a turning point in European history. It is now in our hands.

There is no guarantee that Europe will continue to move forward. The European Union is not a sure-fire success, it cannot be taken for granted. It must be consolidated anew every day.

And so, dear Friedrich Merz, thank you for your powerful speech! You are a true European at heart. You started your career in Europe and today we can see where that is leading: It is fantastic how you are standing up for Europe today. Friedrich Merz, we are proud of you as one of the really great defenders of our European Union!

Our Europe is not just a huge economic area.
Our Europe is the guardian of freedom and human rights.
Our Europe is a guarantor of security and peace.
And our Europe is built on the rule of law.

And yet we all sense that this election to the European Parliament will be different.

Because this peacefully united Europe is being challenged like never before by populists, extremists and demagogues. Whether it is Marine Le Pen with the Rassemblement National in France or the AfD in Germany, whether it is Konfederacja in Poland or Wasraschdene in Bulgaria or Chega in Portugal. As different as these parties may be called, they have one thing in common: they want to divide, weaken, and destroy our Europe. We will never allow that to happen. We want a strong Europe, we want a secure Europe and we want a democratic Europe. That's what we stand for in these elections! We, the Union, are the strongest force in the centre.

I want to form a broad alliance in Europe for the rule of law, for Ukraine and for a strong Europe

I have spent the last few weeks travelling across Europe to achieve this: from Athens to Copenhagen. From Luxembourg to Katowice. From Split via Madrid and Plovdiv to Helsinki. Yesterday I was in Porto. This morning in Vienna. What I have sensed in all these places is a great deal of restlessness among the people. That's not surprising. A lot of challenges and crises are coming together.

But there was also something else. A great deal of trust. Confidence in the European People's Party that we have the necessary foresight to set the right course today for a good future for Europe.

That we have the necessary experience. That we will be the most likely to succeed in maintaining harmony in times of crisis of economic strength, social balance and the protection of our freedom

That is what is expected of us. That is our mission, and we want to fulfil it!

Dear friends, there are only 2 days left until the European elections!
Roll up your sleeves.
Mobilise everything.

For a strong Europe!

I am keeping my fingers crossed for all of our Union's candidates!

Every vote counts!

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

Prosperity, Security, Democracy.

Long live Europe!