



Name and surname	Yordan Grizhov
Nationality	Bulgarian
Country of residence	Bulgaria
Language of the article	Bulgarian

WHAT ARE YOUR IMPRESSIONS ABOUT ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION?

Once upon a time, at the dawn of civilisation, there was a wonderful tale recounted in Ancient Greece about the beautiful and immortal goddess daughter of King Agenor – Europa – who was abducted by Zeus, the cloud gatherer. It is this story which gave rise to the continent's name. According to it, the ancients defined its boundary. The continent ended at the place where Zeus swam across the sea in the form of a bull with golden horns, where Europa's footprints were recognised, which also marked the start of foreign territory.

I am an inhabitant of this continent, and its past, present and future are also mine. My male ancestors have left their mark with hooves, the sword and the pen on its rocky ridges, while my female ancestors have woven the beauty of its fertile land into patterned rugs and songs. And I am rich from their inheritance, rich from the amazing fusion of poetry, affliction and pride bequeathed to me by the ancient Bulgars.

I am an inhabitant of this continent. And my inheritance is all the richer because it is not confined only to an inheritance by blood or to an inheritance of Bulgarian beauty. I am rich because I carry part of Europe in myself. Because that ancient man who drew the Altamira cave paintings is a brother of him who has left a fragment of his world on the walls of the Belgradchik caves in Bulgaria; because the Venus of Willendorf is also my ancestor; because Attila is the forerunner of all the horse peoples which swept across the lands in the west, when the world had set its borders.

Europe is an unavoidable part of my life. It is in the music of Mozart, which excites me and makes my day more beautiful. It is in the inscrutable smile of the Mona Lisa and in the graceful bend of the wrist of the 'Lady with an Ermine'. Europe has developed in me a taste for beautiful and precious things, my ability to be enraptured by the wild northern beauty of the fjords, by the gentle blue colour of the 'quiet white Danube' and by the Mediterranean crowds on the Spanish shore.

Europe's past has been part of my life from my earliest childhood, with the fairy tales of Charles Perrault and Hans-Christian Andersen, the mischievousness of the red-haired Pippi Longstocking and the rose of the Little Prince. Europe has moulded my notions of good and evil in human life. Europe is part of my youthful yearnings for travelling to distant, unknown worlds, with Gulliver's travels, the lonely struggle of Robinson Crusoe and the revenge of the Count of Monte Cristo. Whenever I go to the centre of the Earth, whenever I orbit the Moon, whenever I look at the underwater world through the porthole of Nautilus, I am part of Europe because it has given to the world the incredible fantasies of Jules Verne, the intensity of Balzac's novels and the sad and beautiful verses of Francis Jammes and Paul Verlaine.

But Europe stands for more than just cultural wealth, architectural diversity and tradition. Modern



Europe is also very much part of my everyday life. The mixer I use at home is German, while the TV set, cooker, fridge, dinner set, knives, in fact, everything is in some way connected to Europe, manufactured in Europe, imported from Europe. Europe is literally involved in my life, it surrounds me with objects which belong to it and me.

Modern-day Europe is also part of my leisure time. It features in my computer games, such as 'Knights Of Honor'. It is in the songs of Enrique Iglesias and Leona Lewis. Europe is present in the disco, the club, the café, not to mention in the football stadiums where Milan and Arsenal, Tottenham and Real Madrid size each other up and compete for the UEFA Champions League. It is simply part and parcel of my life.

Occasionally, when I think of Europe, I am amazed at the politicians who have been attempting for a long time to win over their own 'electorate', something which is not part of this continent. They have sought any way, any 'vehicle' for doing this ... My country is already part not only of the continent's territory, but also part of this union, created some 50 years ago, and which has been transformed into a symbol of prosperity and well-being. When the phrase 'The Schuman Declaration' was announced to the world, I was not even born yet. When the Treaties of Rome, Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice were signed, I was a child. But these treaties, these words and these decisions are already part of my life. They open up new paths for me, provide me with new opportunities and make me feel confident about success. Europe is not merely a land mass populated by nations which are culturally and economically close. It is already a union, represented by a circle of stars on the blue background of the sky. It is one genuine 'ode' to joy – to the joy of millions of people being able to live in peace and prosperity, and in certainty about their livelihood, their life and their children. This Europe is part of my life.

While I am, indeed, a descendant of Asparukh, Levski and Botev, I am also part of Europe. Soon, very soon, I will stay in Sofia, Brussels, Paris, London. I will stay in midst of my European world, and I will give it something from my own mind, my own ingenuity and imagination, which I have made with my own knowledge, skills and efforts. I still do not know what this thing will be. It may be space technology, a drug against AIDS, or perhaps a great computer project. Or perhaps it will be something quite simple (one of those 'ordinary' things which give meaning to life) – a poem, a flower, a child. But this thing will create another fragment of this world, making it a better, more humane and more beautiful place.

Today I am creating the future of Europe. I am creating it as a guarantor of peace and freedom for the future generations. The European concept is linked above all to the notion of a Europe without borders. This is a theme running through the history of the old continent, from the Middle Ages down to the present. It has engaged the minds of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Victor Hugo, Aristide Briand and a whole line of thinkers and philosophers. This was the kind of Europe which the pacifists in the 1920s also dreamed of, arguing – perhaps naively but logically – that wars are fought over borders. So, if the borders are removed, wars will be eradicated forever. By accepting the idea of European integration, I have already created in my consciousness the notion of this dynamic, open process, which extends beyond the framework of the familiar cooperation between States. I have accepted that the people living in Europe are my friends, my companions and my brothers.