



## Speeches



### Speech by the President of the European Parliament at the award ceremony for the Charlemagne Youth Prize 2010

Aachen - 11/05/2010

Dr Jansen, Chairman of the Board,  
Mr Philipp, Mayor of Aachen,  
Prof. Hans-Gert Pöttering, former President of the European Parliament,  
Mrs Verheyen, MEP,  
Prize winners,  
Friends,  
Ladies and gentlemen,



I want to begin by saying that I am here today only thanks to my predecessor, Hans-Gert Pöttering. I am very grateful to him for establishing the Charlemagne Youth Prize, which I am convinced is now a permanent fixture.

I should also like to thank the head of the Foundation, since our success is based on sound cooperation with the Foundation. Were it not for the Foundation and its president, Mr Jansen, we would not be here today. Thank you very much.

I should also like to mention our guest from Belgium, Dr Andre Leisen, who is here today with his wife. I am delighted to be sitting alongside him and to be able to discuss this exceptional prize now being awarded for the third time and continually growing in significance. I hope that it will soon be as well known as the prize we have been awarding for 60 years now. The day after tomorrow will see the award of the prize for the European who has achieved most in the service of Europe. This is often the high point of a political career.

In your case it is different. We want to honour young people who think with a community mindset, who cherish our common future and who see Europe as united in diversity. That is why this Youth Prize is so important to us.

I want to emphasise strongly that everyone here in this room today is a winner. You come from many different European countries and in your countries you have all had to face stiff competition. So for us you are all winners of this great competition. As always, however, there can only be a few winners of the major prize and so it is today.

I also firmly believe that there are future Members of the European Parliament here in this

room today. I also think that there is a future President of the European Parliament among you, as well as future prime ministers and ministers, since the future of Europe will depend on you.

Imagine, if you will, the age of Charlemagne, twelve hundred years ago. Already then, he had a vision of a united Europe. Just think how many wars there have been since then and how much European blood has been spilled. We were devoured by hatred. We were in the grip of our emotions. We were unable to think in common. People had a vision of a united Europe then, but did not achieve it. We must remember, my dear young friends, always to keep this vision in mind.

Our fathers' generation created Europe. The generation which came before us were the founders of Europe. We, for our part, wanted to make it work, for it to be united from East to West and for Europeans to understand each other. This work is not yet complete and this goal still lies before us. Our freedom, our unity and our community are under constant threat. You must meet this challenge. I am delighted to see that you think in a community spirit, just as we have done all our adult lives.

Two days ago, we all celebrated the 60th anniversary of the declaration made by Robert Schuman. I would remind you how that small coal and steel community became the great European Community which we now need to preserve. You young people are best placed to do that and to move our Community forward in the right direction.

I wish you all the best in that endeavour. Good luck and thank you.

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Young friends and prize winners,

Europe means rising to challenges through acting together. It means overcoming barriers and cooperating. Europe also means diversity. It is more than just the sum of its individual parts. There is enormous potential and great strength in the diversity of Europe.

The project which has won the first prize, to our mind, represents everything which the Charlemagne Prize should be about. First, building cooperation - by no means an easy task. Second, taking joint initiatives. Third, overcoming frontiers and misunderstandings, because often we do not know each other well enough. We get to know each other better by working together. Finally, most important of all, discovering each other. Discovering our diversity. Realising the delights of our shared life in Europe and how much we have to offer each other. The project I am referring to stood out because it had these qualities.

Twenty-four schools from twenty-one European Union Member States took part in the winning project - a record in itself. But this project possessed another, quite remarkable, quality. Europe has a shortage of engineers, and I say this with some concern, as an engineer myself. In this connection, I want to stress that projects such as Airbus, Galileo and the European Institute for Innovation and Technology, which are intended to propel our economy to new heights, would not have seen the light of day without experts agreeing and working with each other. The project which has been awarded first place in the Charlemagne Youth Prize, from among the 27 national winners, benefited from just that kind of contribution from experts - future engineers - something of which I am especially

proud as an engineer by training myself. A joint project involving technical schools from 21 Member States - now there is an unusual idea.

Putting this idea into practice required a great deal of work, lasting three years in all. Those three years were spent communicating and cooperating with each other. The young people taking part in this project got to know each other very well during this time, not least because we are lucky enough to have communications tools such as the Internet at our disposal and can contact each other in many different ways.

And here is the result. Something which - for all of us - is a technical innovation, an eight-metre-long functioning scale model of a train, running on a 90mm gauge track. You might think that a train is just a train, but let us remember that the project was designed so that all the components, made in 21 Member States of the European Union, needed to fit together perfectly and work as a whole. In addition, it looks attractive. It is the fruit of many years of work and cooperation among young people, overcoming frontiers and differences. In my opinion, it is a worthy winner of our competition.

It is my great pleasure to present the first prize, worth 5 000 euros, in this 2010 edition of the Charlemagne Youth Prize to the Zug für Europa (Train for Europe) project from Germany. More Europe for Europe!

Many thanks.

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