Dear students,

on behalf of Czech centre Bucharest and as a preparation of the Czech Presidency to the Council of the EU later this year, I would like to invite you to the all-day **discussion forum „Václav Havel European Dialogues“.** The event will take place in Bucharest **on May 9th,** so that we can symbolically celebrate Europe Day together.

The project seeks to create a platform for dialogue on the challenges facing contemporary Europe and the Europe we want to live in the future.

For this year, we have selected **2 main themes** – „Democracy in Europe today“ and „Environmental challenges and energy security“. In the morning sessions, we will have expert contributions in two blocks followed by discussion, in the afternoon we will give space to your contributions, since the event is meant to amplify the youth voices on contemporary issues.

**What do we expect from your side?** Presentations for max. 15 minutes, to hear your opinion and arguments on one of the 2 topics of your choice.

As a starting point, we propose some inspiring quotes from the thoughtful legacy of Václav Havel that you can take as inspiration. But you don't have to stick to them strictly – feel free to be contemporary, critical and creative.

**Deadline for your papers/presentations – April 10th.**

Your papers/presentations can be formulated either in Romanian or English. (The afternoon part of the event will be held in both languages alternatively, the morning part will be held in English.)

The specific circumstances of the selection process and your participation should be discussed with the designated Professor at your university.

We hope to have students participation from different cities in Romania, such as from Timișoara, Cluj, Sibiu, Bucharest, Iași and Constanța, so the event should also have its valuable networking aspect.

We look forward to your participation and hope to see you in Bucharest in May.

Sincerely,

Robin Ujfaluši

Director of the Czech centre Bucharest

**A FEW THOUGHTS FROM THE WORK OF VÁCLAV HAVEL**

**Europe as an area of security and development**

I do not perceive the European Union as a monstrous superstate in which the autonomy of all the various nations, states, ethnic groups, cultures, and regions of Europe would gradually be dissolved. On the contrary, I see it as the systematic creation of a space that allows the autonomous components of Europe to develop freely and in their own way in an environment of lasting security and mutually beneficial co-operation based on principles of democracy, respect for human rights, civil society, and an open market economy.

European Parliament, Strasbourg, 8 March 1994

**Responsibility for the world**

It seems to me that Europe – as the historical entity that is responsible for so much of both the glory and the mysery of today´s planetary civilization – should be the first one to demonstrate to the contemporary world how to deal truly consistently with all the dangers, threats and horrors that beleaguer it. Who, indeed, should show how to reverse the two-edged development of our civilization if not the one who once inspired it? Would this not be a truly authentic fulfillment of the European sense of universal responsibility? If Europe is faced with task of newly identifying its mission, its historical role, and its underlying idea – the idea that should also guide its unification – I believe it can hardly look anywhere else than in this field.

This certainly does not mean that Europe should deny its past history, its traditions, its spiritual roots, the principles that moulded its civilization. It means just the opposite: Europe should remind itself how the idea of responsibility for the world was originally conceived within its cultural tradition. The original concept did envisage arrogantly imposing our elevating humankind above the order of nature! It was something else: a humble course of example.

The French Senate, Paris, March 3, 1999

**The planet is not at risk. We are**

If we are at the beginning of serious global climate changes, as scientific studies demonstrate, and if there is a threat of changes to temperature and energy cycles on a planetary scale, it could mean a generalized danger irrespective of the area of civilization people belong to or the continent they live on. It is also obvious from published research that human activity is also one of the causes of change; we just don´t know how big its specific contribution is. Is it really necessary to know it to the last percentage point, though? By waiting for confirmation, for incontrovertible precision, aren´t we simply wasting time when we could be taking measures that are relatively painless compared to the ones we would have to adopt in the event of further delays?

Maybe we should start considering our sojourn on this Earth as a loan. There can be no doubt that for past hundred years at least, the Euro-American world has been running up a debt, and now other parts of the world are joining it and following its example. However, we have entered an era in which nature is issuing us warnings and demanding that we not only stop the debt growing but, on the contrary, start to pay it back.

New York Times, September 27, 2007, newspaper comment

**A chance to inspire the world**

It is my belief that the European Union has a chance to inspire the rest of the world with something much profounder than its model of international co-operation. I refer to the consistent striving to remedy all the questionable things with which Europe predetermined or influenced the entire character of contemporary civilization. It is a trend that is possibly beginning to happen.

What I have in mind is the shift away from the cult of profit at all costs and regardless of its long-term and irreversible consequences, a shift away from the cult of quantitative growth and „growth of growth“, a shift away from the primitive ideal of catching up with and outstripping America or China or anyone else, as well as a shift away from the perilously haphazard settlement of the Earth and the mindless plunder of the planet without regard for the environment or the interests of future generations. I am reffering, of course, to the ingenious saving of energy, when the success of a state is not measured by the growth of its consumption, but its reduction. This is only conceivable, however, if something starts to change in the very soul of present-day Europeans.

European Parliament, Brussels, 11 November 2009

**What we can offer Europe**

The question is what we can offer Europe. It has long been my opinion that after what we underwent at the time of the totalitarian system, we ought - or we are duty-bound even – to explain to others in a convincing manner what we went through, and make specific suggestions based on its various implications. It is not an easy task, and I am not sure we´ve made a good job of it to date. The point is that totalitarian or authoritarian forms of government tend to have very inconspicuous beginnings and employ very ingenious means of controlling society. Only now, in hindsight, do many of us realise how deviously they were entangled in the totalitarian web. That all obliges us to be particularly circumspect. It should be the way we can help guarantee that what we endured will never be repeated.

European Parliament, Brussels, 11 November 2009

***Main sources:*** *Europe as Task, Selected speeches by Václav Havel (Brussels 2009); Deținut politic și președinte, eseuri și discursuri de Václav Havel (Curtea Veche Publishing, 2021)*

**APPENDIX ON RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA**

I often hear the question: how can the United States of America help us today? My reply is as paradoxical as the whole of my life has been. You can help us most of all by helping the Soviet Union on its irreversible but immensely complicated road to democracy. Its path is far more complex than that of its former European satellites.

Speech in the U.S. Congress, Washington D.C., 21 February 1990

Unlike many Western politicians who insincerely truckle to Russia, supposedly in the interests of peace and friendship, I believe that friendship with Russia is served best if we act towards it as equals and tell it the truth to its face, unpleasant as any such truth may be. It is my profound conviction that Russia does not deserve that we behave towards it as we would towards a leper, an invalid or a child who requires special treatment and whose whims, no matter how dangerous, must be understood and tolerated. In addition to the fact that such an attitude does not help Russia at all, and actually insults it, it also strengthens Russia misconceptions or doubtful inclinations. For that matter, such policy does not help the Western statesmen either, as it leads them toward sliding into hopeless compromises.

Conference Europe´s New Democracies: Leadership and Responsibility, Bratislava, 11 May 2001

I think there has been a Russian problem for many centuries that Russia doesn't know exactly where it begins and where it ends. Even though it is the biggest country in the world, it still feels a little bit small and threatened by the tiny neighbours it has around it.

Discussion at Trutnov festival (related to the invasion of Georgia), 23 August 2008