

**Speeches by Mark Leonard, ECFR Director and
German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier
on the occasion of ECFR new office inauguration
in Berlin
on 19 February 2018**

Mark Leonard:

Sehr geehrter Herr Bundespräsident,
Exzellenzen,
meine Damen und Herren,

Herzlich Willkommen in unserem neuen Hauptbüro Unter den Linden. Manche von Ihnen wissen, dass ich mittlerweile intensiv deutsch lerne. Letzte Woche habe ich „Selbstverzwergung“ gelernt und jetzt komme ich von der Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz, wo mir Jean-Claude Juncker ein neues Wort beigebracht hat: welt-politik-fähig.

For those of us who don't speak the language of Goethe, I've been talking about two quite important concepts in European Foreign Policy. The first is about the idea of self-dwarfing. And the second is about being capable of shaping world affairs.

And I can say without exaggeration that there are few people who have done more to combat Europe's self-dwarfing tendencies and who have fought for a role on the world stage than our special guest tonight, Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

On behalf of our co-chairs and the board of ECFR I would like to extend a very warm welcome to you in our new offices here on Unter Den Linden. We are very proud to have such a distinguished guest here to mark the occasion, a statesman who has done so much to bring substance and calm to the uncertain world we

inhabit. but before I introduce you formally, I hope you will let me make a few short remarks.

For us this is not just an office move, but at least two other things.

First, it is an act of faith in the new start for Europe announced in the Coalition agreement and in Macron's Sorbonne speech. After the *annus horribilis* of we decided then to shift the centre of gravity of ECFR from London and to create a more networked ECFR with Berlin as its biggest office. We are maintaining a pan-European foot-print but moving our finance and legal structures here and I – and the SMT - are now also spending half of our time here in Berlin.

Second, it is an act of network-building. The idea of opening our office here is not about having a German ECFR – but doing our bit to heal some of the divisions between north, south, east and west that stop Europe from having an effective foreign policy. By bringing our policy fellows, experts and others we hope to find ways of Europeanising the German debates – on the migration crisis, on Russia, on Turkey, the Iran nuclear deal, China, digital foreign policy, and European defence. And we want to help take German perspectives into the debates we have in our network of offices in seven other capitals.

For me there is a personal element to this network building – and at least the idea of talking about this in German is a great pleasure for me.

My German Jewish grand-parents left Germany for France during the war. My mother and my grandmother returned to Germany in 1950, until love attracted my mother to the UK to marry my British father. My Grandmother stood for all that was best in European culture and she tried to share it with me and to teach a very reluctant child German. I would love to imagine what she would make of me applying for German citizenship and now opening an office in this historic location in the presence of the federal president.

Mr. President, you were here at the beginning of ECFR. You helped us celebrate our 10th anniversary. And now you're here to take this important step in your home country. To many people in Germany and across the world, you're a beacon of sanity in an uncertain world. It is with great honour that I invite you now, Mr President, to formally open ECFR's Berlin office.

German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier

Dear Members of the ECFR Board,

Honored guests,

Meine Damen und Herren,

I am glad to see so many of you again after our meeting at ECFR's tenth anniversary last June here in Berlin at the Hotel de Rome.

Why am I here again today?

Well, first and foremost: to congratulate ECFR on its new home in Berlin! You now represent „Europa Unter den Linden“, joining Embassies and EU institutions. I am confident that you and your staff will find "Unter den Linden" a great place to think about the future of this country and of this continent: Close to the memories and lessons of history, close to where the decisions for tomorrow are being shaped.

Now, it would be easy to celebrate your expanded presence here in Berlin simply as a sign that Germany's weight and importance within the European Union has grown over the years of ECFR's existence. That may be true. It is probably also true that the regrettable decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union has forced the European Council on Foreign Relations to reconsider its physical presence across its many offices in Europe.

But I wanted to be part of this celebration tonight because I welcome ECFR's stronger focus on Germany and its more prominent presence for a *different* reason.

This country has enjoyed an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity. The process of European integration has provided Germany with the best and most convincing answers to the challenges of our history and our geography. Opinion polls generally show that still a solid majority of Germans is aware of the tremendous value of our integration in Europe. The coalition agreement that has been negotiated and is currently under discussion clearly spells out that “a strong and united Europe is our best guarantee for a future in peace, freedom and prosperity.” We have learned that this strong and united Europe is not a given. It is the result of the work, commitment and dedication of every new generation of Europeans. There are plenty of policy challenges that Europe needs to address: from security and defense to migration and refugee policy and the economics of growth, innovation and solidarity. A new German government will have to engage in all of these and many more. And I am sure ECFR’s experts will provide it with sober and useful analyses and advice.

But my expectation of your presence goes beyond specific policy issues. For a country of the size and weight of Germany there is always a risk of losing sight of the way our actions are perceived by our partners. Especially in a period of economic success there is a temptation to think that we do everything right and others should simply follow our example. I am deeply convinced that keeping our eyes and our ears open to the perspectives of our partners, to their arguments and their *counter*-arguments, their grievances and experiences is absolutely necessary to ensure a sound German foreign and European policy. Only if we are able to define *shared* goals with the other member states and only if we are willing to act and deliver together, will we preserve the cohesion of Europe and its capacity to act as one on the world stage.

Here, then, is my message for ECFR’s future work in Berlin: the German debate on foreign policy needs a European perspective. With its pan-European approach ECFR is uniquely qualified to constantly confront us with perceptions and arguments from other EU member states, to remind us of our own “European reflex” and to ensure that this country does not become insular in its success and indifferent to other views.

In these turbulent times for our democracy, it is often said: we, the politicians and policy-makers, need to remain alert and listen carefully to *all* the voices, perspectives and grievances in our societies. I think it is no less important to listen carefully at the *European* level, if we want the success story of European integration to continue. And I could not think of a more fundamental national interest for my country.

Thank you.