



Future of the **EU27**



ANA PAULA ZACARIAS

Interview conducted on 7 November 2019

Clare Gray: Good afternoon everyone. We are honoured and delighted to be joined by the Secretary of State for European Affairs of Portugal, Ms Ana Paula Zacarias. It's a pleasure to welcome you to Dublin and we are very interested to hear your views on the future of Europe.

Ana Paula Zacarias: Thank you very much for hosting me here at the Institute of International and European Affairs. For us, the Europe of 27 is the Europe of the future - the Europe that has, in some ways, to face the challenges that we have to confront now. It's about **digital transformation**, it's about how we have to **fight climate change**. And it is about how these two major transitions will have an impact on our economy, and how we can do this in a **socially-integrated way**, in the way that includes young people in the right schemes, and how we deal with an **ageing population in Europe**. So, we have good challenges that we have to take into account and find the right solutions at 27, on economics, on politics, on social programs that we need to do. And at the same time, bringing Europe to being a beacon of solidarity and democracy in the world.

Clare Gray: Just to touch on that last point – as a beacon in the world- what do you think that Europe needs to do to be a more effective global actor, both based on your experience in the Portuguese diplomatic service and your experience in Europe?

Ana Paula Zacarias: Well, we need to take care of our values, **values of solidarity, democracy, human rights, the rule of law**: these are fundamental to the survival of the Union itself. And then, from there, we can build on a **commercially competitive Europe, a social Europe**, that deals with all of the challenges we have to face in terms of science and technology. So what do we need to do? We need to work together. Bring in the best we have from each Member State to work together, with a **good budget** for the Union for the next 7 years, which can finance a good and ambitious strategy for us to project our capacity to work in the wider world.

Clare Gray: These are very ambitious objectives, now the MFF negotiations (the EU's long-term budget) are really picking up pace. What are going to be the particular policy priority areas for the Portuguese government?

Ana Paula Zacarias: Look, we first need to agree on a total amount of the budget – where does each Member State stand on this? So from our perspective, we need to find a balance between the proposals from the European Parliament and balance those against the current proposal made by the European Commission. So, for us its somewhere around **1.6% of GDP** at 27. But we also need to see how to integrate the different levels of policies. Some people say that we should cut traditional policies. First, they are in the Treaty. Second, they have proved to be very good policies. Third, they do not include all the policies – there are new policies. But when you talk about **CAP**, 40% of the money that will be given for that policy will be given to climate change. And the same for **Cohesion**, 27% will go to climate change. These policies are very important – and they are as new as the other ones. We need to talk about improvements in **science and technology**, we need to talk about **the digital agenda**, we need to talk about **money for migration and integration** we need to talk about **money for development and for defence**. All these are priorities. We need to do this in the right way. These priorities can be equalized i.e. we need to find the right balance of all this in the next EU budget.

Clare Gray: So, a modern, balanced budget for a modern and balanced Union?

Ana Paula Zacarias: Exactly, this is it - **a modern, balanced budget for a modern and balanced Union**. A politician from Ireland recently said – we don't have microwavable solutions. We have to take our time, to discuss, to find the right solutions, **consensual solutions, which will allow us to go forward, united**. This will take some time, but this is the way we do things.

Clare Gray: Thank you very much for joining us Ms Zacarias, it has been a pleasure.

