

Celebrating the Day of Portugal at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology

By invitation of the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology (FCMP) and the Chair “José Saramago”, the Ambassador of Portugal H. Exc. Ms Ana Maria Ribeiro da Silva rendered a lecture titled "Portugal in the European family" as part of the celebrations of the Day of Portugal, Camões, and the Portuguese Communities. The lecture was attended by students and professors, as well as PhD students and postdoctoral students in Portuguese Philology at the FCMP.

During her address to the students of Portuguese language, Portugal's Ambassador Ms Ribeiro da Silva expressed, above all, the hope that they would make their personal dreams come true by participating in the common construction of Europe's future. In her lecture, Ms Ribeiro da Silva gave a brief historical overview of Portugal's accession and membership in European structures and recalled that Portugal has been part of the European Union for 35 years – on 12 June 1985, in the emblematic Monastery of the Hieronymites, a place that symbolises the determination and courage of the Portuguese, takes place the signing of Portugal's Treaty of Accession to the European Economic Community, with the country becoming a full member of the organisation on 1 January 1986. The integration in the European Communities has had a positive impact on many aspects of the lives of Portuguese people, with the strong stimulus for economic development, the reduction of inflation in the country to historically low levels, has helped in the improvement of living conditions of many Portuguese, said H. Exc. Ms Ribeiro da Silva.

In her analysis of the directions of the modernisation of Portugal's economy due to European integration, she highlighted the crucial role of the European Structural Funds, the high productivity growth in the country, the adoption of the European single currency and accession to the Schengen area. "The success of the integration process allows us today to be a developed and competitive country with economic influence in the world, which attracts foreign investment, develops tourism and international relations and is open to the world and actively cooperates with countries in Asia, Africa and America", summed up Ambassador Ribeiro da Silva.

In her lecture, the Portuguese Ambassador paid special attention to the current challenges faced by the Europeans, including the Portuguese, and in particular young people. Quoting the great European Renaissance

poet Luís Vaz de Camões, who in one of his most famous sonnets emphasises the eternal imperative of change ("Times change, desires change, / man changes, trust changes; / the world arises from the constant change, / and continues to acquire new properties."), H. Exc. Ms Ribeiro da Silva called on the young audience to look confidently to Europe's future, to the possible directions of its renewal, to overcoming the challenges of the present with faith in the future.

"Seven decades after the historic Schuman Declaration, the will of Europeans continues to change Europe, we are growing together and enriching our diversity by accepting new members in the European Union (EU). The progress of the EU and its members is obvious and we continue to do what is necessary", said the Ambassador of Portugal, adding that "today's new reality requires a new will. And if, as citizens of Europe, we are aware that the activities of the EU have added value, we also understand that the Union must focus its activities on specific issues, such as the economic and social situation of its people, climate change, migration, health, have become a major problem after last year". "A key issue for the European Union is to ensure that European citizens are more actively involved in decision-making on and off the Union, with future generations in mind, because it is clear that Europe can have a future only if the younger generation has a future in Europe", stressed Ms Ribeiro da Silva.

Focusing on key issues of the current European debate, including the strategic autonomy of Europe, the Portuguese Ambassador briefly outlined the priorities of the Portuguese Presidency of the EU Council (1 January to 30 June 2021). Guided by the understanding that the oceans are the most important regulators of climate and are sources of a huge variety of species, the Portuguese Presidency proposes that the European Union work in the project to preserve the world's oceans, which needs immediate protection.

At the end of her academic lecture, Portugal's Ambassador Ms Ana Maria Ribeiro da Silva recalled the words of the father of Portuguese democracy, Mario Soares, who warned in 1976: "Creating Europe is not an easy task." That is why rethinking Europe and its future is the duty of all Europeans, added H. Exc. Ms Ribeiro da Silva, challenging the students to take an active part in the debate on Europe's future in order to make their voices and their proposals heard, together with those of many other peers, to shape the future of Europe.