Dear young talents, welcome to Brussels. Welcome to the conference New European Talents for the EU, and welcome to your chance of actively shaping your own and Europe’s future. It is a great honour and privilege to be here today speaking in front of this fantastic audience.

At UNITEE, the organisation that I represent, we have a deep interest in the subject of promoting new talent for Europe and the notion of New Europeans working for the EU institutions.

Let me start by explaining what the term New Europeans means, and why we are referring to ourselves as 'New Europeans'?

In Europe, some politicians and certain elements in the media use the term immigrant to describe people whose families may have come to Europe more than 50 years ago. When however will this description as an immigrant end?

At UNITEE, we try actively to change this mentality. We avoid the term as the majority of our members are second or third generation European-Turks. They are holding the citizenship of their respective countries and are no 'immigrants' in the strictest sense. Their country of origin is still dear to them but they see themselves as fully European and see their future in Europe. Therefore we prefer to use a description, which reflects our
The European Commission’s Euro-barometer Survey defines 'New Europeans' as "people who live in the EU and have connections with more than just the country where they live".

We are a diverse community of Europeans united by our common heritage. Europe is our home, and Europe is our future. And any one of you can make a crucial impact in defining it.

At UNITEE, we decided to support and help organise this conference, as a part of UNITEE ACADEMY. A programme that was designed to assist our members and young New European professionals to maximise and cultivate their individual talents and to enrich one another. We offer workshops, tools and methods that will support them in becoming the professionals Europe so desperately needs. Our mission is to help New European entrepreneurs and business professionals to expand and grow their businesses. We now represent more than 15000 of them across 23 European countries.

This goes not without saying that economic growth needs political and social support. Raising the number of New Europeans working in the EU will help us to ensure their voice is heard and general conditions are improved.

This conference aims at helping young professionals and students like yourself to get a better understanding on how the EU institutions function, and how you can become an active player in influencing their decision making processes. Working for the EU is not just a great way of improving your CV and getting valuable working experience, but is also a unique opportunity to get invaluable inside of how the EU functions and to be part of this amazing project called European Union.

In the times of economic crisis and growing social insecurities, it is extremely difficult for young people to find their place in the world. Today I want to talk to you about how the European community can offer you exactly that; a place where you can achieve your goals, where you belong, and where we can built a great future together.
The aim of the conference is to **inspire and motivate you**. It is not easy to get a job at the EU, as the competition is very high, however it is definitely **worth a try**. Let me quote Oscar Wild who said: Shoot for the **moon**, if you miss, you'll land **among the stars**.

In theory, the European institutions are a place that should provide work opportunities for citizens from **each and every member state** no matter what **gender or colour of skin**. The **EPSO**, the European recruitment agency claims to **mirror** diversity in its own team and to take the **best** from people with different backgrounds to achieve our **common goals**. These guidelines should ensure that the workforce working at the EU **reflects** the **many New Europeans citizens** living in the union.

However, the reality still looks somewhat different. Referring to an article by Sonia Jordan there still exists a **dominant uniformity** of appearance of the workers in the European Institutions, resulting in a **visible lack** of ethnic diversity and under-representation of European variety.

To give you an idea, out of the 754 Members of the European Parliament only 3 are of Turkish origin, under representing the 5 million New European Turks living in the European Union.

So why is it that there is still such **low ethnic diversity** in the EU? Are New Europeans **less equipped** than others? Are they **less educated**? Are you unable to become the next Barroso or next Lagarde?

Of course not, these are simply misperceptions.

- One of the reasons for the existing discrepancies today is that cultural diversity is regarded as **a threat** rather than **an opportunity** by many public institutions.
- Another reason is the fact that **many potential candidates** do not have enough **information about the possibilities** at EU level.
This event will address these two important issues. It will make you familiar with the wide range of opportunities the EU institutions offer, and show you why cultural diversity in the EU is an asset rather than a danger.

Let us start by analysing why New Europeans are so important for Europe's future. The two main reasons are:

- Because of your young age you are the answer to many questions in times of the European demographic crisis.
- Because of your special intercultural and linguistic skills, that makes you an invaluable asset in global competition and international relations.

One of the major problems Europe is facing today include the demographic change and the ageing population. The Berlin Institute for Population and Development recently published a study, the findings of which are quite alarming. It shows significant demographic changes among Europe's population as the century progresses. By the year 2050, the European population is set to decline by 8% while in every other region of the world it will rise. In addition, the average age will increase from 39 years to 47 years. Europe needs young professionals like you to take on responsibilities and get ready to work in leading positions.

Moreover, I do not need to tell you just how fast and drastically our world is changing. Europe and the United States were the dominant economic powers of the last century, but the picture will be considerably different for the coming decades. Countries like India, China and the other BRICS states, and also Turkey for that matter, are growing rapidly and are already challenging Europe's dominant role in the world economy.

Due to the changes in the power distribution, it is extremely important to create lasting alliance with our friends from the different regions of the world. Diplomatic excellency and deep-rooted economic integration will stabilise and facilitate good international relations.

Using the skills of new European citizens will be one of Europe's greatest assets in these
matters. You do, like no other, understand the different cultures. You know how to overcome differences and to focus on commonalities in order to build a more peaceful and equal global society.

To work at the EU level requires excellent intercultural skills and the capacity to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers. Coming from migrant backgrounds you are likely to already possess all these abilities. You can face the challenges of a multinational society with your profound understanding of different cultures, religions and languages. You will play a key role to communicate between different groups, civilisations and countries and connect our increasingly multi-cultural community.

Let me point out one of the main keys in successfully doing so. Networking. You have to understand that getting yourself heard by the right people and bringing important subjects to the agenda, is crucial in order to influence decision making and policies. Build up your social capital! Through networks, friends and associations you can get a more powerful initial position and have access to internal knowledge and prospects. So then all that you have to do is: jump at the opportunity!

I also want to encourage you to focus on your strength. Stop thinking about what you cannot do and start concentrating and developing the skills you are good at. Live by your values and believe in your dreams. People can see it in your heart – and if you are passionate about a cause you will succeed in making them feel passionate about it too.

And Europe needs your passion and compassion. It needs people like you, intelligent young and motivated. You have unique and fresh ideas that differentiate you from the older generations. It is this knowledge that Europe needs to face and to overcome some of its greatest challenges. Later on in this conference you will get the chance to listen to some experts that will support you in getting valuable inside on how the recruitment processes at the EU level function. So you can get involved and be real role models and spokespersons for not just New European communities but also young and ambitious people all over Europe.
In conclusion, let me remind you that Europe **proved its resistance** and ability to cope with big **transformations** in the past. Today we represent a **tolerant and modern society** based on **human rights** and **liberty**. We are the **pioneers** in renewable energies, are looking back on a **fantastic cultural heritage** and provide a social safety net which is **unique** in the world.

I want to encourage you to participate in this **extraordinary project** called **Europe**. This event today is only the first step on your way of becoming the **leaders of tomorrow**. It is also **an invitation** to take part in the **events** and profit from the **opportunities** our network will offer in the future. **UNITEE** and our partner organisations will be there to assist **you** in the challenge ahead.

I would like to take this opportunity **to thank** the **EPN, PERITUS Network, Reseau PROACTIF, BS PLATFORM, STIP** and **MULTITUDE** for helping us organising this event. Thank you everyone.

Last but not least let me **finish** by sharing with you what my **father** used to say: **Find a way, build a way or get out of the way.**