

**an diesem Tag in der Geschichte (This Week in History)****Was ist am 25. März 1957 geschehen? (What happened on ... ?)**

The Argentine pontiff urged the leaders at a personal audience in the Vatican City on Friday to show solidarity as an "antidote" to populist parties whose popularity has surged in Europe.

The White House congratulated the EU overnight on its 60th birthday, in a notable shift in tone for President Donald Trump's administration, whose deep scepticism about the bloc has alarmed Brussels.

"Our two continents share the same values and, above all, the same commitment to promote peace and prosperity through freedom, democracy, and the rule of law," the White House said in a statement.

**'Europe our common future'**

The 27 are set to hear a series of speeches urging unity and leadership from Tusk, Juncker, Italian PM Paolo Gentiloni and Maltese premier Joseph Muscat, whose country holds the EU's rotating presidency.

But British Prime Minister Theresa May's absence, four days before she launches the two-year Brexit process, and a row over the wording of the Rome declaration underscore the challenges the EU faces.

Security is tight with snipers on rooftops, drones in the skies and 3,000 police officers on the streets following an attack this week in London claimed by the Islamic State (IS) group.

The Rome Declaration that the leaders will sign proclaims that "Europe is our common future", according to a copy obtained by AFP.

But mass migration, the eurozone debt crisis, terrorism and the rise of populist parties have left a bloc formed from the ashes of World War II searching for new answers.

The leaders are deeply divided over the way forward almost before they have started.

Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydlo only agreed to sign the declaration at the last minute, after bitterly opposing a reference to a "multi-speed" Europe favoured by powerhouse states France and Germany.

Poland, central Europe's largest economy, is concerned that as one of nine of the EU's current 28 members outside the eurozone, it could be left behind should countries sharing the single currency push ahead with integration.

Greece, the loudest voice against the austerity policies wrought by its three eurozone bailouts, meanwhile insisted that the document should mention social policies.