

## H.E. Giuseppina Zarra: Europe reacts well and promptly to the bad consequences of the pandemic

I feel great emotion to come back working in Bulgaria



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*After the crisis due to the pandemic, we have to work in order to get back to the situation before; in the meantime, by understanding the changes in the economy and international relations, we should invest our energies in reshaping the commercial and investment relations by adapting to the new scenario and opening up to innovative solutions, H.E. Giuseppina Zarra, the new Ambassador of Italy to Bulgaria, says in an interview to EUROPOST.*

*Q: Your Excellency, you are back working in Bulgaria after nearly 22 years. How did you feel when accepting the post of Ambassador of Italy in Sofia?*

I felt it was a great opportunity to serve Italy by coming back to a Country that has undergone so many changes after I left. At the same time, I felt a great emotion to come back as Ambassador in a Country where I was a junior diplomat in the 90s and to have the possibility of concretely working for strengthening our bilateral relations and our historical friendship, also in the framework of the European Union and NATO.

*The first year of your term in Bulgaria will certainly be marked by the Covid emergency. Would you rather be an ambassador online or will you find another way to work, keeping at the same time a real contact with people?*

Of course Covid restrictions will require to keep many activities online at least for the first months of the year. But I hope to be able to meet people and representatives personally in respect of the anti-Covid regulations, because the contacts that you may establish by meeting in person cannot be replaced by the meetings online. As for the events, we have to be cautious and avoid any risk of spreading the virus, but we can rely on open spaces and the beautiful garden of the Residence where we might organise some small gatherings. We have however learned by dealing with Covid that there are certain things we can usefully transfer online, so I really hope that we may combine online and in-person activities, choose wisely how to use these new skills in order to help selecting and looking forward to when the virus will be defeated, the sooner the better.

*Q: What will be your first task on your new position?*

My first task will be knowing the Country and the society, listening to the people, Bulgarians and Italians, and understanding. As a great Italian statesman, our former Head of State Luigi Einaudi used to say: First know, then discuss, and after that make a decision.

*Q: Bulgaria-Italy relations are very good as EU partner countries. What would you like to achieve more in their development?*

First of all, after the crisis due to the pandemic, we have to work in order to get back to the situation before; in the meantime, by understanding the changes in the economy and international relations, we should invest our energies in reshaping the commercial and investment relations by adapting to the new scenario and opening up to innovative solutions: green technologies, sustainable infrastructures and transports, digitalisation, innovative products. Italy has an excellent experience in those fields and we may develop new collaborations also in the framework of the EU Green Deal and the Next Generation EU.

*Q: You have a broad view on European affairs. What do you think is preventing the EU from coping more quickly with the economic and cultural damage resulting from the pandemic?*

I think that Europe has reacted well and promptly to the bad consequences of the pandemic, allowing fiscal space and agreeing on unprecedented financial instruments on the social, labour and economic development side. Moreover, the extraordinary efforts enacted to get millions of doses of vaccines is absolutely incredible. Compared to the situation all over the world, it gives really the idea of a great unity, the perception of a community of members that work together towards a common goal. And it is also a lesson for the future in order to get better coordinated for common achievements and policies in new fields.

*Q: Europe in lockdown! You have also studied Philosophy. What could be the philosophical conclusion from the situation in Europe today?*

I think we learned that the human being is a social animal, as Aristotle said many years ago: we cannot survive alone and we cannot live alone. Solitude might be a choice exceptionally, but human beings need networks, exchanges, interaction and a functioning society respectful of the environment in which we live in order to progress, to nourish ourselves and the society itself by ideas. This year is the 700th anniversary since the death of the greatest of the Italian poets, Dante Alighieri: how can we forget what in *Inferno*, Canto XXVI, Ulysses says to his scared mariners before the strait of Gibraltar? Considerate la vostra semenza: fatti non foste a viver come bruti ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza. Consider well the seed that gave

you birth: you were not made to live as brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge.

*Q: I have found out that you have a passion for dancing as well. Have you already chosen which Bulgarian show you will visit first, once the protective measures against Covid-19 allow it?*

I have in mind first of all to meet with all the cultural institutions in Bulgaria in order to have continuous relationships in the whole range of culture, as well as with younger experimental ones: opera, music, concerts, ballet, dance, theatre, performances, visual arts, cinema and so on. As for the show, I have already been to some concerts that have been made possible by respecting the anti-Covid measures. But I am longing to see the end of the pandemic in order to enjoy fully your vibrant cultural scene.

*Close up*

*Born in Salerno, Ms Giuseppina Zarra graduated in Political Science in Urbino and attended the postgraduate school of the Italian Society for the International Organisation before becoming a diplomat in 1991. Bulgaria was her first foreign destination (1994-1998). From 1998 to 2002 she was First Secretary at the Italian Embassy in Ottawa, Canada. Returning to Italy, she followed international financial negotiations at the Foreign Ministry and held the position of First Counselor at the Permanent Representation of Italy to the UN in New York (2006-2009). She later took part in various multilateral negotiations at the UN and EU levels. From January 2021 Ms Zarra is Italy's Ambassador to Bulgaria. She speaks and writes in English, French, Spanish and Bulgarian.*