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Memorial Service
Former Members Association
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“No man is an island,
entire of itself.
Every man is a piece of the continent,
a part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.”

That is how, four hundred years ago, John Donne began the 17th Meditation in his “Devotions upon Emergent Occasions”.

Today we honour the members of our Parliament who passed away last year while serving or after serving.
Without them Europe is the less.

While listening in respectful silence to the roll call of their names, we remembered the faces and figures, the personalities and projects of our colleagues.

They came from different roots and by different roads.
They carried with them different aims and ambitions.
They inspired us and they irritated us with their different views and visions of our political groups and our parties, of our Parliament and of Europe.
Each was a part of the main.

We may not have had a shared history – but we certainly had a common destiny.
It was our diversity that united us. As it unites us today. And as it will unite us and all Europeans in the future.

That diversity may have been stimulating - or it may have been cumbersome - but it was and remains the magic and the misery of our Parliament.

While constructing Europe, propelling democracy and promoting peace, we developed amongst us that inspiring spirit of solidarity and friendship for which our Parliament stands.

They were with us for part of the now 35-year history of that young and unique Parliament.

They joined us in a Parliament that was in the making – both in its buildings and in its meetings – and that still is today.

They took part in its construction – each in their own way – with perseverance and passion, setting stone upon stone of this cathedral of European democracy:

Our Parliament that is not in itself the democracy of Europe, but without which there would be none.

This daring experiment, unique anywhere in the world, that follows no given design, no taken example, that is built not by imitation but by imagination, not by instruction but by invention, that was unfinished and incomplete, uncompleted and imperfect in their time, as it still is in ours – a faithful reflection of our Union.

Europe is not what we *want* – Europe is what we *do*.

A hundred years ago people all over Europe were ready to go to war, as if embarking upon an invigorating adventure, full of bored fin-de-siècle weariness, exhausted by peace, annoyed by diplomacy, set against each other by nationalistic agitation.

In our day a rising number of Europeans in our Union are turning their backs on Europe, annoyed by bureaucracy and compromise, exhausted by the difficult and uncertain search for solutions to crises and conflicts.

And while we blame our Union for this and that - for doing too much or too little, for going too far or not going far enough - the EU-flag is flown proudly by many Ukrainian protesters.

And beyond the Mediterranean Sea, thousands and thousands of people looking for hope and help turn their faces to Europe as an example of freedom, justice and democracy.

Six weeks from now, Europeans in the 28 Member States of our Union will be called upon to vote for the eighth European Parliament - a Parliament that must refuse indolence and resignation and inspire courage and hope
– for our people, for Europe and for the world.

In the presence of the families of Lothar Bisky and Alessandro Fontana we are mourning our deceased colleagues.
Each one has made a difference: To their families and friends at home.
To us in our Parliament.
Each of them has left their mark.
We honour their memory.
We are thankful that they were with us.