

Séance extraordinaire à l'occasion du 25e anniversaire de l'association européenne des anciens parlementaires des pays membres du Conseil de l'Europe

Le jeudi 28 février 2019, Paris

Résidence de l'Assemblée, salle Victor Hugo

Intervention de M. Uwe Holtz, Président honoraire :

« Les 25 ans de l'Association européenne des anciens parlementaires des pays membres du Conseil de l'Europe : une histoire à succès ? »

Speech of Mr. Uwe Holtz, honorary President :

« 25 years of the European Association of former Members of Parliament of the Member States of the Council of Europe : a success story? »

Happy 25th anniversary, European Association of former Members of Parliament!

Mr. President, Madame la Vice-Présidente de l'Assemblée nationale, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to begin my speech in French and to continue later on in English.

1. Il y a un quart de siècle, le groupe de cinq associations des anciens parlementaires de la Belgique, de la France, de l'Italie, de la République fédérale d'Allemagne et de la Turquie a créé officiellement l' « Association européenne des anciens parlementaires des pays membres du Conseil de l'Europe ».
2. La « raison d'être » de notre Association réside dans : la contribution à la construction européenne et à une meilleure connaissance de ses institutions ; l'attachement aux valeurs communes et aux droits de l'homme, la promotion du progrès social et économique, le maintien de la paix, le soutien en faveur d'un développement durable et d'une mondialisation humaine – et l'encouragement de la compréhension mutuelle et des relations amicales.
3. L'élargissement de notre Association européenne, qui compte aujourd'hui vingt-trois associations, est une histoire à succès.

4. Les « Cinq » ont été suivis - dans l'ordre de leur adhésion – : du Chypre, des Pays-Bas, de l'Espagne, de la Grèce, de l'Irlande, du Luxembourg, de l'Autriche, de la Suisse, de la Malte, du Portugal, du Parlement Européen, de la Suède, de l'Andorre, de la Pologne, de la Lituanie, du Royaume-Uni, de la Finlande et du Norvège.
5. A l'avenir, ce succès d'élargissement devrait être prolongé.
6. D'autres pages de succès ont été écrites par les différentes activités, notamment par des colloques, séminaires et rencontres.
7. A l'égard des colloques et en particulier des déclarations pertinentes, je ne cite que quelques exemples : à Rome (2002) sur « Les valeurs européennes », à Berlin (2004) sur « L'intégration politique européenne », à Malte (2012) sur « La transition démocratique dans le sud de la Méditerranée et au Moyen-Orient », à Bruxelles (2014) sur « Les défis de la démocratie », à Lyon sur « La migration » et à Strasbourg (2018) sur « L'avenir de l'Europe ».
8. L'élaboration et l'adoption de toutes les déclarations (jusqu'à maintenant dix) sont des points forts de nos réflexions politiques et des actions proposées. Les associations membres peuvent contribuer à la 'naissance' des déclarations. Chaque déclaration - de même que notre Charte des anciens Parlementarier - est très importante pour la réaffirmation périodique de notre Association et de nous-mêmes. Ces déclarations ont parfois facilité certains engagements dans nos propres pays, dans quelques institutions européennes et dans de jeunes démocraties. Mais elles méritent une meilleure valorisation par les acteurs de la politique active et par le public intéressé.

Now, I would like to switch to English

9. Member associations organized seminars inspiring the participants on different subjects. Just a few examples:

- In 2003, Turkey on "Turkey - a European country",
- In 2004, Ireland on the occasion of the Irish EU presidency,
- In 2009, Portugal on the role and status of former parliamentarians and their associations in the political and civil society,
- In 2015, Austria on "Seventy Years of United Nations" including a visit to the UN City in Vienna,
- In 2016, Sweden on "the Arctic, a hot topic",
- In 2018, Belgium on "Europa Quo Vadis".

10. Besides the general political aims, our Association of former Parliamentarians (shortly FP-AP) aims to develop friendly contacts and to share information with other associations. All personal contacts between our countries are important.

11. FP-AP members invited from time to time representatives to special events, in particular to associations' birthdays, e.g. Belgium, Italy or Germany. Thanks to FP-AP, Polish and German former MPs met for joint consultations.

12. Exciting meetings and lessons learned enriched the participants:

- Many of us could discover European institutions in Strasbourg, Brussels and Luxembourg.
- It was fascinating to learn something about specific political systems, in Andorra or Switzerland.
- Participants met presidents, ministers, experts, new colleagues; visited Parliaments, government buildings, town halls, institutes, fantastic museums and monuments in all the host countries of FP-AP events: in Ankara, Athens, Berlin, Bern, Kiev, Lisbon and Madeira, Lyon, Madrid and Toledo, Nicosia and Limassol, Paris, Rome, Stockholm, Valetta and Gozo, Vienna and the UN City, The Hague and Delft as well as in Warsaw, where we commemorated in June 2014 the beginning of the two World Wars.
- Colleagues could smell the flavor of united Germany in Berlin and feel the sadness about the still divided island of Cyprus.

13. All these resounding FP-AP activities could not have been realized

- without the help of the member associations in cooperation with our secretariat ;
- not without the manifold efforts as well as political and thematic inputs by members of the Bureau and the General Assembly, by the thirteen presidents in the past 25 years and the much more vice-presidents of our Association, and by the different rapporteurs of the colloquies;
- not without the assistance of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, our official cooperation partner since 2009.

Mega-thanks are going to all of them!

14. Two points where there is space for improvement

- So far, women are underrepresented in the two organs of our Association. According to the FP-AP website: Only 9 of the 23 member associations¹ (39 %) include women and just 12 (a fifth) of the 59 delegates nominated for the Bureau and the General Assembly by the respective associations are women. I am sure that this will change in the future. Women are en marche.
- The relevance of the EU is widely known and of the Council of Europe widely unknown. FP-AP helped to narrow the knowledge gap – at least among our own ranks. Walter Schwimmer, rapporteur for Europe's future, was a great facilitator in this respect, too. The pan-European house, constituted by the Council of Europe, is based on the three pillars of democracy, human rights and the rule of law and accommodates rooms with many, many conventions and treaties. Because of its potential and the contributions to European unity, the Council of Europe deserves more attention and cooperation with other entities.

15. There would be no functioning of the FP-AP without the magnificent support provided by the French National Assembly in Paris (FP-AP's social seat) and the Belgian Senate in Brussels (the administrative seat).

16. We are very grateful to the French National Assembly for all the facilities provided to us. We are very grateful for the restless support given by the French former members association and by the various first FP-AP vice-presidents appointed by the French association. Un très grand merci!

¹ AN (1), AT (2), BE (2), DE (1), FMA (1), IRL (1), LIT (1), NO (1), SE (2).

17. Since the very beginning of the European Association, Mr. Roland Roblain, the then administrative director of the Belgian Senate, has been and still is the *spiritus rector* and the highly competent FP-AP Secretary General.

Madame Lisette Hermans-Nelissen is our highly valuable secretary always stepping in where and when needed as well as our good human relations officer.

As our treasurers vice-presidents and our auditors testify, our accountant Mr. Krist Decanni re is managing *comme il faut* our annual budget. Furthermore, he is our very competent webmaster and photographer.

Due to their experiences in the Belgian Senate, all the three long standing personalities form a good, professional team. They, you contributed to a very high degree to the European Association's success. Our heartfelt thanks to you! We are lucky to have you.

18. Congratulation to the European Association on its silver jubilee!

The European Association knows that mutual understanding, cooperation and solidarity for the common good and the wellbeing of all Europeans will have to prevail over still existing disagreements, tensions and conflicts.

Let us strengthen our efforts in order to help overcome autocratic, nationalistic, racist movements and temptations. Inspired by our overarching leitmotif :

The future of Europe: never again war – never again dictatorship, living together in peace and democracy!

All the best for the next 25 years!

See also U. Holtz: History, objectives, organization and activities of the European association of former members of parliament of the member states of the Council of Europe (www.fpap-europe.org/history-en) – Historique, objectifs, organisation et activit s de l'Association europ enne des anciens parlementaires des pays membres du Conseil de l'Europe (www.fpap-europe.org/historique-fr).