

COOPERATION WITH THE EUI

THE ORAL HISTORY OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



To celebrate 40 Years of direct elections to the European Parliament, the Former Members Association (FMA) put in place a series of initiatives, concluding with its Annual Events on 10-11 December 2019, in Brussels. Over the past year, the FMA organised two high-level conferences with the European University Institute (EUI) and the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), the first on 22-23 November 2018, in the Badia Fiesolana, Florence, and the second on 3 April 2019 in the European Parliament, Brussels. Both featured distinguished speakers and representatives of the FMA. On 29 November, FMA members were invited to attend a Conference on the History of the European Parliament: research projects, sources and historical memory 1979-2019. I had the honour of opening the conference, together with Emanuelle Ortolí, President of the Friends of the Historical Archives of the EU, and Dieter Schlenker, Director of the Historical Archives of the EU (HAEU).

The Conference took place at the House of the European History in Brussels. This event was intended to mark the 40th anniversary of elections to the European Parliament by universal suffrage. It presented an inventory of the written and oral historical and commemorative sources relating to the history of the European Parliament, whose powers and role in both the legislative and budgetary domains have not ceased to grow since its first mandate. The participation of authoritative members of our association, such as President Enrique Barón Crespo and Alain Lamassoure, made a significant contribution to the celebrations of the 40th anniversary, with lively discussions. The project Collecting Memories of MEPs (from 1979 to 2019) was one of several to be presented. It is to the great credit of the HAEU, which launched this project with the support of the FMA, that they have created a unique space where future researchers will be able to find the lively testimonies of MEPs who have participated in and contributed to the life and evolution of the institution.

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The project was conducted by a number of researchers, all former Parliament officials. In less than two years, the project has already been a success: more of 100 interviews have been deposited in the HAEU database and the project is still ongoing. The FMA was a crucial partner in this project, inviting former Members to be interviewed by the researchers.

During the presentation of the Collecting Memories project, numerous extracts of interviews were presented, giving an excellent idea of what it can offer researchers: a mix of politically and historically relevant elements framed by personal considerations.

Furthermore, the researchers also published a book entitled *Shaping Parliamentary Democracy*, published by Palgrave. Divided into ten themes, it is not an academic book but a structured collection of stories. At the end of each chapter, the reader can find the contribution made by MEPs, along with notes from their interviews, something that is highly appreciated by researchers. The book can be purchased on Amazon or the Palgrave website. I hope that this fruitful collaboration can continue in the future, with the same passion, enthusiasm and professionalism of our esteemed members.

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