

FORMER MEMBERS NETWORK

25 YEARS OF FP AP: WE ARE EUROPE

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Are there really good reasons for leaving the European Union? In the way in which it will go down in British history? Any loss of a democratic country is a wound that does not heal well.

All of us - the British included - are affected by the consequences and have to find a new form of togetherness - not with weapons and violence, not through populism, racism, terrorism or hatred, but, rather, through a personal commitment to peace in our world! Wars are the work of man - and so is peace. And Europe is what we all are! That was also the thinking behind the 2018 report entitled 'The Future of Europe' by the Association of Former Members of Parliament of the Member States of the Council of Europe (FP-AP), drafted by former Council of Europe Secretary-General Walter Schwimmer, the quintessential message being: No more wars! The last 25 years form the basis for FP-AP's vision for the future. This is how that period was described by Uwe Holtz, Honorary FP-AP President, in his anniversary address: '25 years ago, in 1994, the group

of five Former Parliamentarians Associations from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Turkey officially created the 'European Association of former Members of Parliament of the Member States of the Council of Europe' - shortly FP-AP. FP-AP's raison d'être consists of contributing to the European construction and a better knowledge of the European institutions, of being attached to common values, true democracy, human rights and consolidation of peace, of favouring social and economic progress, of supporting sustainable development and a human globalization - and of encouraging mutual understanding and relations of friendship.

“Once deeply divided, we are looking now at a more united and open Europe.”

FP-AP's enlargement, today numbering 23 member associations, is a success history!' A knowledge of history is absolutely essential for countering scepticism and sceptics. As current FP-AP President Rune

Ryden stressed: 'Not so long ago, dramatic changes had happened in the history of Europe. Once deeply divided, we are looking now at a more united and open Europe. The creation of our FP-AP association was somehow a natural consequence.

We established many new connections between our countries, and thus we increased our knowledge about each other, thus strengthening the links.' Carole Bureau-Bonnard, Vice-President of the French National Assembly, voiced her high regard for the FP-AP on the occasion of its anniversary:

'Your experience and your work must feed in to our shared debate about a 'new Europe' which needs countries that are united, and which must guard against a prevailing nationalism and self-isolation and, of course, advocate a more social Europe that has a greater sense of common purpose, is economically powerful in the face of globalisation, and keeps the peace within its borders.' A new chapter in the life of the FP-AP is starting one in which it must look to the future.

It would welcome more members from eastern Europe. In addition, our responses are needed to address issues such as artificial intelligence, digitisation, a toxic internet culture, cybercrime, robotics, space debris, plastic waste, hygiene, health, a lack of jobs, climate change, migration and ongoing refugee movements. We must be innovative and think differently. War is the work of man - but so is peace!

Brigitte Langenhagen

EPP, Germany (1990-2004)

brigitte-langenhagen-cux@t-online.de



From left to right: Vice-President of the French National Assembly Carole Bureau-Bonnard, FP-AP President Rune Ryden, FMA Board Members Brigitte Langenhagen and Jean Pierre Audy @ 2019 FP-AP