

**Fifteenth Annual Memorial Service 9 April 2024**  
**Webstreamed from the Hemicycle**  
**of the European Parliament**  
**Introductory Speech of the FMA President**  
**Klaus HÄNSCH**

Dear First Vice-President,

Mesdames et messieurs les Députés,

Chères familles,

Mesdames et messieurs,

It is an honour to welcome you to our annual ceremony under the auspices of the European Parliament in memory of our colleagues, former Members of the European Parliament, who have died during the past year.

I should like to welcome and thank First Vice-President Karas for his presence, representing the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola.

I welcome the former President of the European Parliament, Pat Cox, who will close today's ceremony with a final address.

We remember our departed colleagues, accompanied by their beloved families, who are here today and connected online.

I greet them all warmly.

It is with great emotion that I read the long list of names of former Members of this House to whom we pay tribute today. Colleagues who have dedicated their political life to this institution with courage, steadfastness and vision, believing in the European project as a way to guarantee unity and peace on our continent.

On the eve of the European elections, let me quote a great European, Jacques Delors, who served the European cause with rigour and conviction:

*“The European project is not just about governments, but also about citizens. We need their active participation.”*

On the eve of the European elections, I would like to remind you that being a European citizen is first and foremost about participation and that means also taking part in the elections.

Let us continue with determination the work of the colleagues we are commemorating today, and may their memory always serve as an inspiration to us all.

This year's elections are particularly important and we must demonstrate the democratic vitality of this institution!

Long live the free and democratic European elections!

I would like to thank the musicians Koen Claeys (classical guitar) and Philippe Lambert (trumpet) for their participation in our ceremony.

It is now my great honour to invite the First Vice-President of the European Parliament, Mr Othmar KARAS, to take the floor.