

Annual Report 1997

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"A breath of new life"

As I mentioned in last year's Report, the springboard for ELEC's work should be the work undertaken by active Commissions.

An apt illustration is the Mediterranean Commission, chaired by Mr. Carles GASÒLIBA i BÖHM, which organised a major symposium in Barcelona on the Mediterranean's European Dimension - a timely subject to say the least! Algeria, Turkey and the question of the Kurds are regular priorities on the E.U. agenda.

In another realm, after several months of silence, the new chairman of the Agriculture Commission, Mr. Rudolf STRASSER, organised an interesting work session on areas where the CAP required adaptation in view of European enlargement.

The overarching theme, however, is undeniably the Economic and Monetary Union. The climax of this process will be the installation of the euro, preceded by the forthcoming deadline to choose the first countries to join the EMU club. Although several meetings to co-ordinate legislation and practices are still needed to achieve the process, we can already speak of a success in this historical step to install a single currency in the European Union.

Another topic of growing importance is the E.U.'s enlargement to at least ten new countries, a vital issue in forging the new Europe. The choice of countries, the pace of negotiations for accession, and these countries' adaptation to the *acquis communautaire* are all challenges at the forefront of preoccupation by the European institutions. Neither should we forget the changes needed to the functioning, strategy and budget of these institutions.

It is thus clear that enlargement will be a priority for both Europe and the world over the next few years. This will imply a search for a long-term vision on the strategy to be followed. ELEC will be called on to discuss this subject together and adopt a stance, if only to influence the political decisions that will be difficult but vital in building a Europe of thirty to thirty five countries.

For ELEC, therefore, the issue of enlargement is a breath of new life and a subject that will occupy several Central Councils.

The importance of this new E.U. dimension, moreover, was recognised by our Enlargement Commission which, under the leadership of Mr Michael PALMER, discussed over the year the strategic, political and social transformations that now face the countries of the region.

Daniel CARDON de LICHTBUER

THE CENTRAL COUNCIL

ELEC Central Council met in Barcelona on 20 June and in Brussels on 12 December.

In conjunction with the **Enlarged Central Council in June**, a symposium on "The European Dimension of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership" was organised at the invitation of Patronat Catala Pro Europa and the Chairman of the Mediterranean Commission, Mr Carles GASOLIBA i BÖHM. A "Cahier Comte Boël n°6" has been compiled and includes the main talks given on this occasion as well as the resolution adopted by the Enlarged Central Council.

Members attending the 20 June Central Council heard a talk by Mr Krzysztof NERS, President of the "Policy Education Centre on Assistance to Transition" in Warsaw, on problems linked to enlargement and on the Polish situation in particular.

During the luncheon, Mr Carlos FERRER SALAT, President of the High Council for Chambers of Commerce in Spain and President of the International Vienna Council, stressed the crucial importance of conducting an active employment policy, involving all social partners.

At the **Central Council's 12 December meeting in Brussels**, representatives of twelve countries were present. The President, Daniel CARDON de LICHTBUER, presented the objectives and topics of the conference to be organised at The Hague in May 1998 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the European Movement. ELEC is responsible for organising the economic and social forum, one of the three working groups entrusted to relaunch the idea of Europe of the 21st century.

Mr. Hervé CARRÉ, director at the European Commission, summarised recent developments on the euro and during the luncheon, Mr. Albert COPPÉ, former minister and former European Commission member, shared his memories of the first steps in building the European edifice.

ACTIVITIES of the NATIONAL SECTIONS and MEETINGS of the WORKING COMMISSIONS

22 January - Barcelona

Conference-luncheon with Mr Luis FOIX, Director of "La Vanguardia" newspaper. Topic: "Where are we heading?".

22 January - Brussels

Belgian League Lecture: "Europe, so undear to the hearts of public opinion" with Philippe LEMAITRE ("Le Monde") and Lionel BARBER ("The Financial Times").

13 February - Brussels - Mediterranean Commission

The Commission focused on the draft report "ELEC Considerations on the EU Mediterranean Policy" which would be the basis for the June symposium in Barcelona.

25 February - Barcelona

Conference-luncheon with Mr. Joan VALLVE, MEP and President of the European Association of Border Regions.

28 February - Luxembourg - Working Party "SMEs in Central and Eastern Europe" of the Enlargement Commission

First meeting of the special working party set up by the Enlargement Commission to study problems experienced by SMEs in Central and Eastern Europe - primarily focusing on the EIB's financing policy.

10 March - Barcelona

Lecture - "Will Spain meet the Maastricht criteria?" by Prof Joaquim MUNS, Administrator of the Bank of Spain.

21 March - Brussels - Monetary Panel

In addition to a round table discussion on the economic situation in various European countries, the Panel members heard a talk by Mr. Jan MICHIELSEN, from the Belgian Euro Commissariat.

A resolution was adopted by the Barcelona Central Council.

9 April - London

Sixth Brandon Rhys Williams Memorial Lecture by Peter SUTHERLAND, former European Commissioner and GATT Director General, Chairman of Goldman Sachs International. The lecture was published in the European Business Journal.

10 April - Brussels

Lecture by Prof. Franklin DEHOUSSE, Representative of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the IGC on "The IGC, its problems and prospects", on invitation by the Belgian section.

11 April - Stuttgart - Transport Commission

Meeting under the chairmanship of Mr André CELLARD at the invitation of Daimler BENZ; the Transport Commission studied the question of road transport telematics and prepared a resolution adopted by the Barcelona Central Council.

18 April - Prague - Enlargement Commission

The Enlargement Commission met under the chairmanship of Mr Michael PALMER at the European Studies Centre of the Institute for East-West Studies to discuss problems linked to EU enlargement, in particular the functioning of institutions, and reform of the CAP and the Structural Funds.

25 April - Paris - Economic and Social Commission

Mr Olivier GISCARD d'ESTAING chaired this meeting, which centred on three topics: benchmarking, public procurement and a study of the automobile sector in the global context.

7 May - Brussels - Working Party "SMEs"

Second meeting of the working party, attended by representatives of the EBRD and DG II of the Commission.

7 May - Barcelona

Lecture by Mr Carles GASÒLIBA i BÖHM, MEP, on "ELEC's Mediterranean Policy".

16 May - Brussels - Mediterranean Commission

Final meeting to prepare the Barcelona symposium.

22 May - Barcelona

Conference-luncheon on the subject "Ethics and business: priorities in a context of globalisation". The guest of honour was Mr Antonio GARRIGUES WALKER, Chairman for Spain of the UN High Commission for Refugees.

16 June - Luxembourg

Mr. Charles GOERENS, MEP, gave a talk at the Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce on "European integration: desirable, indispensable and feasible?" to a group of some 70 people including many dignitaries.

19 June - Barcelona - Symposium "European Dimension of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership"

After Mr. Carles GASÒLIBA i BÖHM, President of the Mediterranean Commission, presented the basic report, speakers addressed the following topics: Prof. Dominique TABUTIN (Belgium) on demographic aspects, Mr. Jean DEFLASSIEUX (France) on financial aspects and partnership, and Mr. Ben VAN TOL (Netherlands) on training business leaders. H.E. Mr. VANNI d'ARCHIRAFI, Italian Ambassador to Spain, proposed considerations on general policy for this region. The Central Council adopted a resolution.

19 June - Barcelona - Executive Committee

20 June - Barcelona - Central Council and General Assembly

2 July - Brussels - Working Party "SMEs"

The group continued its work under the chairmanship of Mr. Michael PALMER, with the participation of representatives from Commission DGs II, XVI and XXIII, as well as the Austrian Chamber of Commerce.

11 September - Brussels - Working Party "SMEs"

Presentation of the JOP programme (PHARE/TACIS) in order to complete the working group's information on financing possibilities for SMEs in the region.

17 October - Madrid - Monetary Panel

Meeting of ELEC economic experts held at the invitation of the Banco Bilbao Vizcaya to compare points of view, in particular regarding convergence criteria and modalities to set exchange rates for the euro.

A press release was published after the meeting.

24 October - Brussels - Enlargement Commission

In addition to a progress report from the working party on SMEs in Central and Eastern Europe, the Commission heard from Mrs. Françoise GAUDENZI (DG IA) on Agenda 2000.

28 October - Barcelona

Lecture by Mr. Joan TAPIA, director of "La Vanguardia" on "The European Union after Amsterdam".

29 October - Brussels - Working Party "SMEs"

A representative of DGI reported on the PHARE and COOPME programmes.

7 November - Brussels - Economic and Social Commission

Meeting to discuss the length of the work-week and to set up a working group to organise ELEC's participation in the forum at The Hague conference in May 1998.

The Brussels Central Council ratified the resolution presented by the Commission.

10 November - Dublin

ELEC Sean Lemass Memorial Lecture at the Royal Irish Academy by Ken CLARKE MP former British Chancellor of the Exchequer on "What future for the euro". The lecture was attended by leading politicians, industrials and civil servants including Irish Prime Minister Bertie AHERNE TD.

13 November - Brussels - Working Party "SMEs"

The working party studied the first draft of the final report, prepared by the Rapporteur Mr. Roland TAVITIAN.

14 November - Paris

Together with the Singer-Polignac Foundation, the French section organised a major symposium on Mediterranean questions, with the participation of officials from French academics and diplomacy as well as ELEC President Daniel CARDON de LICHTBUER, the President of the Mediterranean Commission Mr. Carles GASÒLIBA i BÖHM, and representatives of various ELEC national sections.

18 November - Barcelona

The Spanish section was granted an audience with HM King Juan Carlos on the occasion of its 40th anniversary.

24 November - Andorra

Lecture on "The Euro and the Stock Markets", by Mr. Joan HORTALA, president of the Barcelona Stock Market.

26 November - Brussels - Agriculture Commission

First meeting under the chairmanship of Mr. Rudolf STRASSER. The group studied problems linked to the WTO and enlargement.

5 & 6 December - Kronberg - Monetary Commission

The traditional Monetary Commission was held in Kronberg under the chairmanship of Dr. Wilfried GUTH, papers were presented by Messrs Hans TIETMEYER, Philippe MOUTOT, Hans-Gert PÖTTERING and Otto von der GABLENTZ.

11 December - Brussels - Executive Committee

12 December - Brussels - Central Council and General Assembly

18 December - Brussels - Working Party "SMEs"

The group continued its work to finalise the report and recommendations for various bodies.

And also ...

The traditional briefings by the British section with the ambassador of the countries taking over the European presidency (in 1997 the Netherlands and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg).

The British section also worked with the European Parliament to organise a seminar on relations between the United Kingdom and Europe since 1945.

And not to forget ...

The publication in 1997 of the ELEC Information Letters under the supervision of Mr Regis MALBOIS, ELEC Advisor:

Letter n°5 (April): "From Euro-Boredom to Euro-Passion".

Letter n°6 (June): "Post Amsterdam".

and two new issues of the Cahier Comte Boël:

n°5 "A New European Social Model".

n°6 "European Dimension of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership".

NEWS from ELEC

United Kingdom

With great sorrow ELEC announces the death of Lord RIPPON of HEXHAM, architect of Great Britain's adhesion to the European Union and Central Council member, and also the death of Baroness SEEAR. Both had presided over the British section and participated wholeheartedly in its work to the very end.

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