

Annual Report 1999

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

From one presidency to the next

Since it was founded in 1946-47 around half a century ago, the European League for Economic Co-operation has had only five presidents. Some, such as Paul van Zeeland or René Boël, have played a major role at the head of the organisation through their charisma and their commitment to Europe. This characteristic also reflects the importance changes which the role of ELEC's President has undergone over the years.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, ELEC was conceived as an organisation for the promotion of discussions, consultations and liaison between policy makers and the economic and industrial worlds in order to lay the foundations for a reconstructed and federal Europe. Since those days the task of the president has been gradually changed and extended. After the baton had passed to the European institutions, whose major initiatives and achievements led on to the creation of the European Union we know today, the main concerns of the Presidency became the work of influence, recognition and consolidating the role and structures of ELEC.

It was no easy task to occupy a narrow niche among the institutions and non-governmental organisations and associations which had the same aims, or to preserve its originality and its motivation during the crises which sometimes undermined the objectives of the founding fathers and troubled European citizens.

But the originality of ELEC remained the fact that it remained above all a place for reflection and debate involving major figures within national sections and commissions on which representatives from many different countries were represented. It was also distinguished by its independence from the public authorities, and the relevance of its positions – which has always and continues to be guaranteed by the Presidency – has enabled it to overcome crises and apparent contradictions. In this way, over the last eleven years, we have been able to ensure the continuity of ELEC whilst giving it the necessary impetus to enable it to continue to perform its role of analysing the realities of a fast-changing Europe at the beginning of the new millennium.

The task of a new President is at once difficult and essential. Difficult since it comes at an unhappy and uncertain time for Europe, where fundamental questions concerning its future have not been settled and public opinion, whilst still basically in favour of the European project, is experiencing some doubts. Difficult, too, because the changeover between generations is not easy, and the business and banking world is questioning the added value of ELEC. Difficult, lastly, insofar as the development and acceleration of communications media and globalisation – to mention these factors alone – entail a re-examination of our organisation's strategy. It is just this task which the new presidency will have to tackle.

Precise proposals will be made to the presidents of national sections and commissions with a view to reinforcing the place and role of ELEC against a rapidly changing European and world background. The organisation has a number of advantages, including its past and present action, its independence and the high standard of its analyses. There remains much work to be done to build the Europe of tomorrow. But nothing would be possible without these changes, and the genuine and profound motivation of our

members. As the guarantors, from one presidency to the next, of the continuity of ELEC's mission, this is our main concern today.

Ferdinand CHAFFART Daniel CARDON de LICHTBUER

THE CENTRAL COUNCIL

The ELEC Central Council met twice in 1999, on 11 June in Copenhagen and 10 December in Brussels.

At the meeting hosted by the Danish National Section, the Enlarged Central Council discussed the issues of reforming institutions as well as European policy on employment. The former European Commissioner Henning CHRISTOPHERSEN and Prof. Lars CALMFORS of the University of Stockholm also addressed these questions at talks they gave on this occasion, and Prof. David GRESS (Danish Institute for International Affairs) proposed a comparative analysis of the EU as seen from the US point of view. In addition the participants were granted an audience with H.M. Prince Henrik of Denmark.

The main feature of the 10 December Central Council in Brussels obviously was Ferdinand CHAFFART taking the helm as ELEC's new President. Daniel CARDON de LICHTBUER, the immediate past President, was named Honorary President by unanimous vote.

On this occasion Mr. Chaffart shared with the participants his proposals on the organisation's future strategy, which will focus on a much closer collaboration between the commissions and call for greater involvement from the national sections. The Central Council also adopted resolutions proposed by the Economic and Social Commission, meeting the previous day, on tax policy and pension funds.

ACTIVITIES of the NATIONAL SECTIONS and MEETINGS of the WORKING COMMISSIONS

13 January - Vienna

Eurolunch in collaboration with the International Vienna Council on "Chancen zur Optimierung der Beziehungen zwischen Slowakei und Österreich" by Mr. Lubor BYSTRICKY, Slovakian Ambassador.

10 February - Brussels - Working Group Enlargement

Chaired by Michael PALMER, two sessions were devoted respectively to financing enlargement and the nature and role of the enlarged Europe. The idea of a conference on enlargement was also launched.

10 February - Brussels

General Meeting of the Belgian Section.

15 February - Barcelona

Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Spanish Section.

17 February - Barcelona

Conference by Mr. Lluís FOIX, Assistant Director "La Vanguardia", on "Europe of nationalisms".

22 February - Vienna

Eurolunch with Dr. Albert ROHAN, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on "Das Kosovo-Problem".

8 March - Brussels - Economic and Social Commission

Chaired by Olivier GISCARD d'ESTAING, the Commission studied tax co-ordination and the problems of jobs lost in duty free shops, item which led to a resolution.

8 March - Vienna

Eurolunch with a presentation by Dr. Gabriele MATZNER-HOLZER, Austrian Ambassador to Slovakia: "Das Image der Slowakei".

18 March - Brussels - Mediterranean Commission

The Commission, chaired by Carles GASÒLIBA i BÖHM, heard from experts on the situation of Cyprus and Malta, in the context of their application to join the EU.

19 March - Turin - Monetary Panel

This meeting chaired by Bernard SNOY discussed: developments in the bond market, the international implications of the euro and tax harmonisation.

22 March - Paris

Lunch-debate in the Salons of the Présidence du Sénat on "L'Allemagne d'aujourd'hui" introduced by Mrs. Brigitte SAUZAY, Chancellor Schröder's Counsellor for France.

26 March - Vienna

Eurolunch with the Finances Minister Mr. Rudolf EDLINGER who presented a "Tour d'horizon über die österreichische und europäische Finanzpolitik".

12 April - Barcelona

Conference by Mr. Joaquim MUNS, Administrator at the Bank of Spain, on "International economy. Reality and future".

16 April - Budapest

Press conference organised by the Institute for World Economics in preparation for the Enlargement Commission's meeting.

16 & 17 April - Budapest - Enlargement Commission

At the invitation of Prof. Andras INOTAI, Director of the Institute for World Economics and Chairman of the Hungarian Section, the Commission chaired by Michael PALMER heard reports on preparation of the Hungarian public administration with a view to their admission to the EU, financing enlargement, and Hungarian minorities in Rumania, Slovakia and Yugoslavia.

23 April - Leuven - Agriculture Commission

The agenda of the meeting, chaired by Rudolf STRASSER, addressed the present situation of enlargement negotiations in the field of agriculture, and heard reports on the European agriculture model and the challenge of bio-mass.

4 May - Vienna

Eurolunch on the theme "Rumänien - Rückblick und Perspektiven" by Mr. Ion NEAMTU, Rumanian Ambassador in Vienna.

17 May - Bern

General Assembly of the Swiss Section.

27 May - Brussels - Working Group Enlargement

The meeting was devoted mainly to studying plans for a conference on enlargement (venue, topics, financial means, etc...).

2 June - Vienna - Enlargement Commission

The experts invited commented on the work of OSCE, whose main task consisted in conflict prevention by sending missions into appropriate countries, the role of the Council of Europe in the field of minority rights which concentrated on setting up legally binding laws, and the Austrian view on enlargement, including agricultural matters.

10 June - Vienna

Eurolunch with a talk by Dr. Wolfram LITTICH (Vienn Stock Exchange) on "Die strategische Ausrichtung der Wiener Börse AG".

10 June - Copenhagen - Economic and Social Commission

Two aspects of the tax system were examined: the conclusions of the German presidency in tax matters and the European policy on tax co-ordination. A draft resolution was prepared to be presented to the Central Council.

10 June - Copenhagen - Executive Committee**11 June - Copenhagen - Enlarged Central Council - General Assembly****7 July - Paris**

Lunch-debate with Mr. Félix ROHATYN, US Ambassador to France, on the theme "Les États-Unis d'Amérique sont-ils un modèle pour l'Europe?".

8 July - Brussels - Mediterranean Commission

The subject of the meeting was Syria, followed by a general discussion.

13 July - Brussels - Working Group Enlargement

The meeting was devoted to plans for the conference.

20 July - Vienna

Eurolunch with a presentation by Prof. Helmut KRAMER (WIFO) on "Überlegungen zur Steuerharmonisierung in der EU".

7 September - Vienna

Eurolunch on the topic "Bulgarien - Rückblick und Perspektiven" by Dr. Kiril KALEV, Bulgarian Ambassador.

13 September - Barcelona

Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Spanish section.

13 September - Bern

Lunch-debate with Minister Jacques de WATTEVILLE who commented on "Le secret bancaire et la coopération en matière fiscale: EU et OCDE".

21 September - Brussels - Working Group Enlargement

In addition to plans for a conference, the group studied Charles JENKINS' draft report on the role of the enlarged EU.

24 September - London - Monetary Panel

The Panel reviewed topical problems such as "Nine months with the euro: where do we stand?" and "Making the euro a full success".

14 October - Brussels - Infrastructures Commission

Under the chairmanship of its new President, Dr. Ottokar HAHN, the Commission heard reports by experts on satellite navigation systems and Trans-European networks (TENs). A work programme including themes to be dealt with, strategy and working methods was adopted.

22 October - Brussels - Agriculture Commission

Chaired by Rudolf STRASSER, the Commission heard reports by experts on: the dioxin crisis, the status of enlargement negotiations in the field of agriculture, the US position in agriculture in the framework of the WTO-Millennium Round.

26 October - Barcelona

Conference by Mr. Alejandro PEDRÓS, professor of public finances, on "European tax-harmonisation. General topics and specific aspects".

28 October - Brussels - Working Group Enlargement

Continuation of the feasibility study for a conference.

8 November - Vienna

Eurolunch with a presentation on "Pensionsreformen - nachhaltiger Sozialumbau am Beispiel Österreichs" by Prof. Bernd MARIN.

9 November - Vienna

Eurolunch with Dr. Hansrudolf KAMER (Neue Zürcher Zeitung) on "Europas Südosten - Krisenherd auf Dauer?".

22 November - Brussels - Enlargement Commission

Two presentations enriched the debates: the future relations between the EU and countries of the Balkan Region and the European Commission's point of view on the progress of EU membership negotiations.

25 November - Brussels - Mediterranean Commission

The Commission met to prepare the Barcelona Conference to be held in May 2000, on the East-Mediterranean Region.

26 November - Kronberg

Annual meeting of the German section.

26 & 27 November - Kronberg - Monetary Commission

The meeting of the Monetary Commission, under Rolf BREUER's presidency, was the occasion for a discussion after presentations on "The banking landscape in Euroland: trends and strategies" (Emilio YBARRA, President Banco Bilbao Vizcaya) - "The international role of the euro-trends, advantages and risks" (Christian NOYER, Vice-President ECB) - "The world wide currency situation and international monetary co-operation" (Jürgen STARK, Vice-President Deutsche Bundesbank) - "Co-operation versus competition of economic policies in the EU" (Mario MONTI, European Commissioner).

29 November - Vienna

Eurolunch with the participation of Dr. Franz HÖRHAGER, Senior Financial Adviser East Central Europe on "Die Zukunft Rußlands?".

6 December - Bern

Lunch-debate about "Direkte Demokratie und Integration: Hürden und Lösungen" with a presentation by Prof. Wolf LINDER (Bern University).

9 December - Brussels - Economic and Social Commission

The European policy on tax co-ordination was on the agenda again as well as problems linked to pension funds. Both topics led to proposals for two resolutions.

9 December - Brussels - Executive Committee

10 December - Brussels - Central Council and General Assembly

And not to forget...

The ELEC Information Letter n 10 published in September 1999, with an editorial written by Mr. Régis MALBOIS, ELEC Advisor: "From Brussels to Copenhagen".

NEWS from ELEC

Belgium

A new Secretary General has been appointed: Gérard DUPRIEZ.

Death of Albert COPPÉ, former Minister and European Commissioner.

Denmark

Henrik Olejasz LARSEN, Senior Executive Vice-President of the Den Danske Bank, accepted nomination as Chairman of the Danish section.

France

Death of André CELLARD, advocate to the Paris Court of Appeals and former Minister. Chairman of ELEC's Transports Commission.

Germany

Dr. Ottokar HAHN, former EU Ambassador to Moscow, accepted to be named president of the Transport Commission, henceforth called the Infrastructures Commission.

Spain

Nomination of Carles GASÒLIBA as Vice-Chairman of the Spanish section, succeeding Carlos Ferrer Salat.

Death of Daniel PAGES RAVENTOS, member of the Spanish section and Spanish representative to the Agriculture Commission.

Switzerland

Benoit MERKT becomes Secretary of the Swiss section.

United Kingdom

The Earl of Stockton, grandson of Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, succeeds Lord Kingsland as Chairman of the British section.

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