

Annual Report 2001

PRESIDENT's MESSAGE

The euro and Europe's citizens

A little over a year ago, we were left disappointed by the results of the European Council in Nice. As ELEC later noted, it quickly became apparent that this long-awaited Summit was a missed opportunity and a rejection of Community spirit in favour of a narrow focus on national interests.

A few months later, the rejection of the Nice Treaty by a majority of Irish voters clearly demonstrated the unease felt by the public regarding a European project which appeared simultaneously more and more complex and remote from their real concerns, and increasingly fragile and dubious in its very basis. The debate on the European Union's "democratic deficit" fostered the impression that most Europeans were not really interested, and that European integration, for good or ill, was essentially being imposed over their heads.

The enthusiastic reception of euro notes and coins and the ease and rapidity with which the old national currencies have been superseded strongly suggest a more optimistic impression: Europeans, it appears, are more enthusiastic about Europe when it presents an image which immediately conveys its purpose and usefulness. The new money, which is at once a concrete economic reality, a vital tool for trade and a powerful political symbol, certainly conveys such an image.

The revived enthusiasm for the European idea in the wake of the single currency should help overcome the temptation to retreat into nationalism and provide a springboard for further advances. These are needed more than ever, and in several different areas: the arrival of the euro has exposed the need to complete the internal market in a number of major respects, including finance; the "Lisbon process" aiming at making the European Union the most competitive economy in the world by 2010 is already falling behind this ambitious timetable; enlargement is looming on the horizon though clearly neither the Union's institutions nor its agricultural and structural policies are ready to welcome ten new Member States; and finally, the single currency will continue to under-perform on the world stage unless it can rely on political support and coherence that are genuinely European.

The Laeken Declaration, though it left many questions unanswered, has clearly defined the goals to be striven for: a European Union that is simpler in its governance and better understood by its citizens, a Union that is stronger and more efficient in the pursuit of its ambitions, a Europe that is more present in the world and more resolute in shouldering its responsibilities. Great hopes are put on the Convention set up under this Declaration, which will shortly start its work. As well as following this work with the greatest of interest, ELEC will make its own contribution, using the accumulated influence and experience of more than half a century in the service of the European project.

Ferdinand CHAFFART

THE CENTRAL COUNCIL

During 2001 the ELEC Central Council met in Prague on 8 June and Brussels on 14 December.

The **enlarged June Council** had two subjects on the agenda: "Globalisation and governance" and "Challenges of the Enlargement". These subjects were addressed, respectively, by Professor Jorge Braga de Macedo, President of the OECD Development Centre in Paris, and by Mr. Petr Kubernat, director of European affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Czech Republic. The latter speech was discussed by Mr. David Ringrose, deputy head of the European Commission Delegation in Prague.

As well as the usual reports by the Presidents of the commissions, the Central Council was also brought up to date on the implementation of the new strategy finalised at the Brussels meeting of 15 December 2000. Finally, the Council examined a draft resolution on "The Future of the European Project" introduced by Mr. Régis Malbois. After discussion, it was decided that a new version taking account of the points raised in this debate would be sent to national sections to enable them to enrich it with their own reflexions. ^[1]

The **Brussels meeting** focused on "Business and the European project". The meeting heard two speeches, the first entitled "Doha: prospects for global governance" by Pierre Defraigne, Head of Cabinet to European Commissioner Pascal Lamy; the second entitled "The voice of business in Europe must be heard urgently", by Philippe de Buck van Overstraeten, the new Secretary General of the UNICE.

The Central Council also adopted a resolution proposed by the Economic and Social Commission on the taxation of savings in Europe. ^[2] After hearing the commissions' reports and a report by Ivo Stanek on an initiative of the Austrian section regarding the Danube cooperation process, the Council examined the question of cooperation between ELEC and other organisations with similar aims. In that connection the Council also heard a call by Honorary President Daniel Cardon de Lichtbuer for ELEC to return to its rightful place in the European Movement. Finally, the Council gave the go-ahead to the setting up of an Institutional Study Unit consisting of retired senior European officials living in Brussels or in Luxembourg. The Unit would be headed by Régis Malbois. Its purpose would be to examine the reform of the European Institutions on behalf of ELEC and to make its voice heard in the debate.

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[1] After this procedure a final version of the resolution was adopted after written consultation of Central Council members and submitted to European political leaders.

[2] Another resolution drafted by the Economic and Social Commission, expressing ELEC reaction to the events of 11 September, was also adopted through a written consultation procedure..

ACTIVITIES of the NATIONAL SECTIONS and MEETINGS of the WORKING COMMISSIONS

9 February - Frankfurt - Infrastructures Commission

Chaired by Ottokar HAHN, the meeting focused on the state of preparation of the Galileo project. A letter was addressed to the chiefs of government.

22 February - Barcelona - Spanish section

Conference by Mr. Joan HORTOLA, President of the Barcelona stock exchange, "Las bolsas en la Europa del euro".

6 March - Bruxelles - Mediterranean Commission

At the meeting, chaired by Carles GASOLIBA, Mr. Antonio NEGRE, President of Eurochambres, presented various aspects of the cooperation between chambers of commerce in the Mediterranean region.

14 March - Paris - French section

Lunch-debate with Ms. Anne-Marie IDRAC, Former Minister and President of the European Movement France, on "L'Europe après la Conférence intergouvernementale de Nice".

19 March - Monaco - Monegasque section

Constituent General Assembly of the new Monegasque section, under the presidency of Mr. Henri FISSORE, Monegasque Ambassador in Rome, and Mr. Jean DEFLASSIEUX 1st Vice-President.

Ms. Corinne LAFOREST de MINOTTY has been appointed Secretary general.

23 March - Amsterdam - Monetary Panel

Under Bernard SNOY's chairmanship, the Panel studied the problem of exchange rates policies in the candidate countries, the work of the Lamfalussy Committee, and decided to publish a new version of the Cahier Boël n°8 on the euro.

5 April - London - British section

Briefing on the Swedish presidency by the Swedish Ambassador.

6 April - Bruxelles - Belgian section

General Assembly.

11 April - Bern - Swiss section

General Assembly.

27 April - Paris - Economic and Social Commission

President Philippe JURGENSEN asked various experts to present their views on the tax harmonisation on savings and on the European statute for companies.

2 May - Bruxelles - Infrastructures Commission

Meeting devoted to recent developments of the Galileo project and the Public Private Partnership.

3 May - Bruxelles - Enlargement Commission

Michael PALMER, President, asked John PALMER (Director at EPC) to present his views on enlargement prospects, and Josef CHRISTL (Chief Economist, Creditanstalt) to speak on the best exchange rates policies for the CEECs.

24 May - Barcelona - Spanish section

Lunch-debate "Formación de ejecutivos en una sociedad internacional competitiva" with MM. Andreu MAS-COLELL (Generalitat de Catalogne) and Carles CAVALLE (Director general IESE).

8 June - Prague - Enlarged Central Council and General Assembly

19 June - Bruxelles - Working Group on Enlargement

Devoted to the preparation of a meeting "enlarged" to three other commissions of ELEC (Agriculture, Economic and Social, Infrastructures).

13 September - Bruxelles - Mediterranean Commission

In preparation for the Palma Conference, Mr. Patrick LAURENT (Head of Unit, DG External relations of the E.C.) introduced the EU Mediterranean policy regarding the promotion of

private investments, and Mr. Paolo NICOLETTI (UNICE) the actions undertaken within the framework of the UNIMED Business Network.

27 September - Bruxelles - Economic and Social Commission

In addition to the preparation of the common "Enlargement" meeting, the commission debated on: corporate taxation in a globalised economy, a draft resolution on the consequences of the terrorist attacks of 11 September, and the final drafting of the resolution on taxation on savings in the EU (both adopted by the December Central Council).

28 September - Bruxelles - "enlarged" Enlargement Commission

At the initiative of the Enlargement Commission - the following items were discussed: "capital needs of the candidate countries and their domestic and international financing" (Economic and Social Commission Eliane MOSSE and Jean-Marie SEPULCHRE), "the impact of enlargement on the WTO negotiations on agriculture" (Agriculture Commission: Shelby MATTHEWS) and "the Public Private partnership: financing infrastructures in the EU and the CEECs" (Infrastructures Commission: Klaus MILZ and D. BADEA-TAYLOR).

5 October - London - Monetary Panel

The Panel proceeded with its usual *tour d'horizon* on economic convergence (introduced by Peter BLACKIE, Head of Unit, DG ECFIN of the E.C.), and heard Malcolm LEVITT on the Lamfalussy Committee report.

15 October - Turin - Infrastructures Commission

At the invitation of the Italian section, the commission heard reports on transport and international trade, trans-European networks, the Galileo project and Public Private Partnership.

15 October - Turin - Italian section

A presentation of ELEC to industrialists of the Piedmont Region, with speeches by a.o. MM. Alfonso IOZZO and Umberto AGNELLI.

17 October - Paris - French section

Lunch-debate with Mr. Guy BRAIBANT (Honorary Section President at the Conseil d'Etat): "L'UE à la veille du Conseil de Laeken"

19 & 20 October - Palma de Majorque - Mediterranean Conference

More than sixty participants attended the annual Mediterranean Conference on "the promotion of private investments by EU countries in the Mediterranean region", with many speakers of high calibre.

15 November - Barcelona - Spanish section

Conference by Mr. Pedro SOLBES, European Commissioner, on "Política económica y monetaria de la UE en el momento de la introducción de monedas y billetes euro".

22 November - London - British section

8th "Brandon Rhys Williams" Conference by The Earl of Stockton on "Europe is good for the individual".

26 November - Budapest - Hungarian section

Presentation, in collaboration with the Villa Farber Group: "Thinking Enlarged - The Accession Countries and the Future of the EU", with the participation a.o. of Prof. Andras INOTAI.

26 November - Bruxelles - Working Group on Enlargement

The Group drafted a working programme for the Enlargement Commission.

5 December - Bruxelles

Conference jointly organised by Promeuro, ELEC and the Union of European Federalists on "The Euro: what's next". The conclusions presented by the chairmen of the three panels and commented by MM. Mark EYSKENS (Belgian Minister of State), Edmond ALPHANDERY (President of the Euro-50 Group) and Eric PEREE (Economist at EIB), were followed by exposés by MM. Pedro SOLBES, European Commissioner, and Didier REYNDERS, President of the Euro-group and ECOFIN.

7 & 8 December - Frankfurt - Monetary Commission

The annual meeting of the Monetary Commission, under Dr. Rolf BREUER's chairmanship, gave participants the opportunity to listen to presentations on "Enlargement of the EU: a central banker's Perspective" (Hermann REMSPERGER, member of the Directorate of the Deutsche Bundesbank), "The single monetary policy: issues on the eve of E-Day" (Otmar ISSING, member of the Executive Board of ECB), "Current issues of policy coordination in the euro-zone" (Pedro SOLBES, European Commissioner) and "Prospects of Bancassurance in Europe" (Anton van ROSSUM, CEO Fortis Bank).

14 December - Bruxelles - Central Council and General Assembly

17 December - Barcelona - Spanish section

Lunch-debate with MM. Josep PUJOL (President, Ficosa Internacional) and Joan MOLINS (Director general Cementos Molins): "Internacionalización de nuestras empresas".

18 December - Gdansk - Polish section

General Assembly.

And not to forget ...

ELEC Information Letter n°12 (January 2001) "What is in store for Europe after Nice?", and n°13 (December 2001) "Europe: Renewal or Eclipse?", with editorials by Regis MALBOIS, ELEC Adviser,

and the Cahier Comte Boël n°9 "The Enlarged EU: a Wider Role? / L'Union européenne élargie: un rôle plus large" with contributions from members of the Enlargement Commission.

NEWS from ELEC

Andorra

Mr. Jorge BENTUE ARANTEGUI replaced M. Josep MONTANES ALSO in the function of Secretary General of the section in Andorra.

Austria

Mr. Josef CHRISTL - asked to join the Cabinet of the Austrian Minister of Finances - resigned from the post of Secretary General of the Austrian section

Monaco

Mr. Henri FISSORE, Monegasque Ambassador in Rome, has been elected President of the new Monegasque section. Ms. Corinne LAFOREST was appointed as its Secretary.

Netherlands

Death of Dr. Jelle ZIJLSTRA, who had been Minister for Economic Affairs and Finances, President of the Bank of the Netherlands and member of ELEC Honorary Committee.

Poland

Mr. Maciej DOBRZNIECKI has been elected President of the newly re-structured Polish section.

Spain

Mr. Carles GASÒLIBA, President of the Spanish section, was honoured with the title of "Commendatore de la Republica d'Italia"

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