



European Journalists
Association

The Communication Network asbl

51th EJ International Congress

Opatija (HR) – October 3-6, 2014

The 51th Congress of the “European Journalists Association – The Communication Network” gathered more than 70 journalists from EU and non-EU countries in the beautiful Croatian city of Opatija on October 3-6, 2013.

The European institutions addressed the participants with two video messages from the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, and the vice-president of the European Commission, Viviane Reding. The congress was honoured by the presence of a special guest, Maria Romana De Gasperi, daughter of the Italian founding Father of the European Union Alcide De Gasperi..



EJ President Paolo Magagnotti opens the Congress

After the European and Croatian anthems, the EJ president **Paolo Magagnotti** opened the congress recalling the huge tragedy that happened the day before near the Italian Island of Lampedusa with hundreds of African people who lost their lives in the Mediterranean Sea while escaping from dictatorships and starvation. After that all participants stood up for a minute of silence and reflection Magagnotti condemned with heard words the EU Institutions and especially the European Commission which for too long time “turned a blind eye” in front of the cries of despair of people ending their lives at the Southern EU borders, leaving Italy

almost alone to face the immigration's tragedy in the Mediterranean Sea, adding that the huge problem has highlighted a lack of solidarity by EU Member States too.

The EJ President continued underlining the very significance of the congress coinciding with the recent Croatia's accession to the European Union. He also recalled the coincidence with the tenth anniversary of the reunification of Germany and the 40th anniversary of the first historical enlargement in 1973 when the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland joined the European Economic Community.

After that he welcomed the representatives of the local and national Institutions, guests, speakers and all the EJ members and presented briefly the main congress' theme "The Crisis: A New Beginning for More Europe?" and the second topic of the program: "Tourism, Movement of People, Infrastructures and European Integration" comprising two subjects : *The Case of Tourist Development in the City of Opatija and the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County*". *The additional topic was "Independent Journalism in Europe: Does it Exist?"*



The Major of Opatija, Ivo Dujmić, welcomes the European congress' participants

Welcome addresses were delivered by **Ivo Dujmić**, major of Opatija, **Zlatko Komadina**, President of the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County and Ivancica Celevska, director of the International Center for Education of Journalists from Central and Eastern Europe, Opatija.

The major Dujmić underlined the importance of the cities in the context of the European integration and, recalling the unique historical cultural past of its beautiful city, expressed the commitment of the municipality's administration and the entire local community to look at the future with European openness, spirit and motivation.



The Assistant to the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Hrvoje Marusić addresses the Congress' participants.

The Croatian Government was represented by the Assistant to the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs **Hrvoje Marusić**. In his address, after expressing satisfaction for Croatia as 28th EU member he underlined the willingness of his Governments to promote as much as possible the involvement of citizens in the European project and in this regard put special emphases on the role of journalists.



Maria Romana De Gasperi, daughter of the Italian founding Father of the EU Alcide De Gasperi

First session – “The Crisis: A New Beginning for More Europe?”

In introducing the session the EJ President recalled the main steps of the European integration underling that while being happy and proud of the “miracle” made in the effort to unify Europe after WWII we can’t just be satisfied from what has been achieved till now but we need to be deeply aware of the enormous changes introduced by globalization and interdependence and look forward with far-sightedness and courage.

Recalling a statement by the futurologist Hazel Handerson who said that “it is a crime to waste a crisis”, Magagnotti highlighted that the crises has undeniably contributed to the acceleration of the EU decision-making process and the implementation of long-needed measures and that the resilience of the Euro has boosted for sure our international credibility. Now, being seriously aware of the today’s almost tragic situation and of the challenges of the future that we need to face, we are not allowed to make up any excuse and turn a blind eye. We urgently need to shape an advanced EU institutional architecture to be up to the present and future growing globalized and interdependent world.

Cutting the still existing gap between EU Institutions and citizens fostering more democratic legitimacy, structural reforms, a real long-term common defense, a banking union and serious steps towards a federalization of the European Union are among the urgent undertakings required to shape a European Union able to face the challenges of the future, being aware that the EU in addition to think at the wellbeing of its citizens must play a growing role in guaranteeing peace and stability worldwide, Magagnotti said, adding that the 2014 elections of the European Parliament must be an occasion to discuss in-depth the future architecture and finalities of the European Union, which must become a real political union.

Regarding responsibility and role of the journalists within the European project the EJ President confirmed their commitment to favor a European public space where citizens must be informed and put in the conditions to influence the policy-makers while the public institutions must provide for them conditions to work in a context of independence and freedom of expression.



Jo Leinen, MEP

First speaker on the main congress’ theme was **Jo Leinen**, member of the European Parliament and President of the European Movement International. He underlined at the beginning the importance of keeping the idea of the EU founding fathers alive. The MEP said that the economic crisis got the drop on the European countries but, finally, they managed to

face the challenges quite well. "I think every crisis should be used as a chance. We had that already. I would say that in the last two years we did more than we would have done in 12 years", he added. Still, there are many things that need to be solved. The monetary union alone cannot survive. We need economic and financial coalition, we have to integrate and coordinate our budgets, our taxes, our macroeconomic politics. Furthermore, we need an energy community and to invest in discovering new technologies and new products to compete on the world market. "It is not money, but competitiveness that we are losing!", Jo Leinen emphasized. He also underlined the importance of investing in citizens, not in banks only: "billions of euros have been invested to save the banks, but not so much money have been invested to save the citizens and increase their faith in the EU", he said. Banks, he added, were saved with taxpayers' money, a thing that should not be repeated". At the end of his speech, Jo Leinen put special emphasis on the urgent need to have a new convention for 2015 and look again at the EU's responsibilities.



Gianni Bonvicini, Executive Vice-president, Institute of International Affairs, Rome.

"The fiscal union is a great target, but this is not enough", said **Gianni Bonvicini**, executive vice-president of the Institute of International Affairs in Rome. The process of the EU integration is unbalanced and we should move ahead and re-launch the issue of PESCO and create a defense community. "To merge the Eurozone with the euro-defense zone might be the right way towards a political union", Bonvicini added.

The last European Council in 2013 needed to take more ambitious steps towards an economic union far beyond the Fiscal Compact on the budget discipline.

Gianni Bonvicini put special emphasis on the need of a European defense.

Occasion of utmost importance to shape the future of the European Union will be for Bonvicini the elections of the European Parliament in 2014 and "the relevant debate must consider the finalities of the European Union and especially the Union's democracy", he said.

In addition to that the political parties or the coalitions of parties of different EU countries should propose to their voters a candidate for the presidency of the European commission.

Further questions to be considered during the election campaign according to Gianni Bonvicini should be a.o. common growth policies, the approval of a budget based on more autonomous sources (carbon tax or Tobintax), the appointment t of a treasure commissioner who will be directly responsible towards the European Parliament and a precise roadmap towards the Political Union.



Dan Lazea, Pro-rector for International Relations and Communication, West University Timisoara.

Dan Lazea, pro-rector for International Relations and Institutional Communication of the West University Timișoara, in Romania, emphasized that, in the time of a crisis, governments should pay attention not only to the economic integration, but also to the political integration. He underlined the importance of strengthening the democratic system in some EU countries. “It is not enough to have a financial/economic integration, but also a political integration is needed”, he said. In countries of EU partnerships (e.g. Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia), the power of Europe lays in giving the feeling that the EU isn’t just about economic and crisis, but it’s about being part of a democratic system and it is a way of getting out of the green zone of geopolitics and entering a safe area. This is actually the main idea of the founding fathers of the European Union, back in the 50s, and Europe should pay more attention to this role. We need a deeper integration in terms of finance, but there is an ongoing proposal for deepening political integration in terms of establishing a common mechanism for saving democracy. Lazea gave as an example Hungary and Romania, where the European Commission had to intervene in order to assure that democracy is respected. Dan Lazea also brought into discussion the fact that young people’s trust in the EU decreases and underlined the importance of keeping the Erasmus programme alive because it is one of the most powerful symbols of the EU.

The first speakers’ presentations were followed by a panel chaired by **Sanja Romić**, EJ representative in Zagreb and former Brussels Correspondent for Croatian media, with five journalists and experts.

Rolf von Hohenhau, president of the Taxpayers Association of Europe and EJ member, highlighted that we need more Europe as a world of freedom, solidarity and economic union and we must finish with this grey zone represented by the countries still influenced by the Russian system. He added that in the same time we need less Europe. He gave the example

He underlined the importance of investing in innovation as science is a solution for creating more jobs for the youth. Hetzel also said that we should not have European taxes because if we have additional taxes we'll have European debts. Furthermore, he emphasized that "Europe needs to change its mind-set: you can only spend what you have earned and go for innovation."

Vassil Sotirov, chief of the Foreign Department of the Bulgarian daily Newspaper "24Hours" and EJ Executive Committee member, said that, in his opinion, the crisis is rather a challenge than a chance. European people must change their mind-sets, especially people from the Eastern countries for whom the integration is still very difficult.

Sotirov expressed deep worry about the situation of Eastern Member States in the EU; they are in a context fearing that they will not be in the condition to take full advantage of the opportunity of the European Project.

Bojan Brezigar, former editor in chief of the Slovenian newspaper "Primorski Dnevnik" and EJ member, after having listened to the messages of the president of the European Parliament Martin Schulz and the Vice-president of the European commission Viviane Reding realized that the two EU representatives while belonging two different parties, in regard to the future of the European union have very similar ideas. In such a context "the difference about the EU isn't as much between parties but between convincing Europeans and Eurosceptic", Brezigar said.

Enzo Farinella, Dublin correspondent of the Italian news agency ANSA and EJ member, emphasized the difference between stability and solidarity, underling the need to put first of all values at the basis of the European project. Among the most important values that can also aggregate people there is especially solidarity, Farinella highlighted.

He also underlined the responsibility of journalists to provide a correct information about the EU activities.



From left: Katarzyna Pelka, Barbara Pehi, Marc Willière, Corina Fornade, Paolo Magagnotti, Rotger Kindermann.

Both the panel and the following debate, moderated by **Michael Jäger**, CEO of the European Economic Senate and Secretary General of the German EJ Section, highlighted the need to concentrate not only on the economic recovery, but also on political integration and that Europe must not forget the role it plays on the international scene regarding safeguarding democracy and stability worldwide

Interesting have been the presentations and the discussion on the second day of the congress.

Corina Beatrice Fornade, editor of the monthly magazine "Infomediu Europa" and EJ Secretary-General, introduced the theme and the speakers and then she gave the floor to Hendrik Schott, President of the FIJET Germany and President of the German EJ Section VEJ, who moderated the session: **Tourism, Movement of People, Infrastructures and European Integration. *The Case of Tourist Development in the City of Opatija and the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County.***

The presentation of the relevant realities were made by **Goran Pavlović**, head of the Convention & Incentive Bureau, Opatija Tourist Board ((see: www.opatija-tourism.hr) and **Renata Vincek**, advisor, Kvarner Tourist Board respectively. (see: www.kvarner.hr/turizam).

Jacques Campé, Secretary General of the FIJET and EJ Executive Committee member highlighted the fact that the tourist sector represents a major contribution to the GDP of many European countries: 5% of the labour force, more exactly 10 million jobs. It has a major contribution to the economic growth in some countries and, furthermore, promotes the idea of Europe and of feeling being Europeans. People moving around come to know different cultures and traditions and get in touch with new people thus creating also human networks facilitating a mutual understanding that benefits the European integration. The question he raised was weather more tourism means better tourism. "Unfortunately, I see a trend: there are more and more all-inclusive resorts", he said, adding that in all-inclusive resorts people don't get out and spend money somewhere else in the tourist area.

Lights and shadows of European tourism today were presented by **Antonio Bonelli**, president of CIST (International Center of Tourist Press) - FIJET Italia and journalist publisher & director media of "ITP EVENTS". He underlined the need of a more concrete tourism policy at any level; a policy that must take into serious consideration that in the today's changing world also attitudes and needs of tourist are changing.

The panel ended on a positive note as **Klaus-Dieter Martin**, founder and CEO of the "European Coastal Airlines", talked about seaplanes and sustainable infrastructure development for Croatia. "All inclusive tourism is not the future tourism. Nowadays, people don't go on holidays for 2-4 weeks as they used to in the past", he said. Therefore, it is very important to expand the transportation networks and give the possibility to other people from the neighbourhood regions and countries to spend a weekend or a couple of days in some beautiful areas from the Croatian coast. Taking this into account, he started 10 years ago a project – European Coastal Airlines (ECA) – that aims at bringing up the standards in tourism in some regions in Croatia. The project plays a major role in the daily transit of citizens and tourists in some Croatian regions and it also includes some neighbourhood countries like

Italy, Austria and Slovenia. The ECA project will include in the coming few years more and more destinations.

The third session about “**Independent Journalism in Europe: Does it Exist?**” began with a panel chaired by **Katarzyna Pelka**, editor of the Polish National TV and EJ Executive committee’s member. She expressed her worries regarding the media freedom and the situation of young journalists.



Rotger H. Kindermann, editor of the German monthly magazine “Mittelstand” and EJ Vice-president, expressed concern on the threats to media freedom and to journalists. The main difficulties journalists have to deal with are the political influence and the economic and financial pressure. Freedom of expression and information is one of the basic rights of the Europeans and press freedom is the first condition of other freedoms, he said.

After this short introduction to the reality of the European media, participants were delighted to listen to **Maria Romana De Gasperi**, daughter of the Italian Europe’s founding father Alcide De Gasperi, who spoke with special word of remembrance for his father and the principles and values he followed during his career as a journalists-

Vassil Sotirov, chief of the foreign department of the Bulgarian daily newspaper “24Hours” and EJ Executive Committee member, continued the panel expressing his worries about the situation of mass-media nowadays which “turned themselves into speakers of power” and made an overview of the Bulgarian media. He paid special attention to the lack of precise rules for media ownership in general and to the growing political, economic and financial influences.

Very worried about the current situation of the media was also **Sanja Romić**, EJ representative in Zagreb and former Brussels Correspondent for Croatian media. She presented the situation of the mass-media in Croatia and the difficulties journalists here have to face with. Economic crisis, the publishers substitute quality with cheapness and the trivialization of the media are few of the main problems. Furthermore, media are economically dependent in many European countries and journalists are poorly paid. Therefore, Croatian media is facing right now a de-organization and more than 300 journalists (out of 800) from Croatia lost their jobs.

Barbara Pehi, Social Networker and EJ Vice-president, presented a short profile of the media landscape in Hungary and spoke about the main problems that affect the freedom of expression and the freedom of opinion. For her, in general terms, except the economic and political influences, the quality of the media is also affected by the lack of professionalism and respect towards the code of professional ethics especially in a time of a crisis, a subject more extensively developed by **András Radetzky**, EJ member and vice-director of the Hungarian Catholic Radio. For Radetzky ethics must be at the basis of the activity of all journalists, taking into consideration that readers, viewers and listeners are human being.

The third session ended with a discussion chaired by Juan **Antonio Prieto**, president of the Spanish EJ section and EJ vice-president. Both the presentations of speakers and panelists and the subsequent debate highlighted the difficult and serious situation of the mass-media and its paramount importance as the media freedom is a precondition for the shaping of a democratic and modern European society.



EJ President Paolo Magagnotti presents the main conclusions of the Congress

The participants to the congress concluded that “we need more Europe with less bureaucracy and stronger efforts in communicating Europe”. We need not just an economic integration, but also a political union. To have more political Union we need more solidarity, with strict respect for a culture, which must be the foundation of all values.

“With solidarity we can make the weaker part stronger, thus putting all parts in the condition promote and to keep stability and peace ”, concluded the EJ, **Paolo Magagnotti**, who added that we also need “affordable economic governance and banking union together with a common defense, to make the EU more attractive even in times of crises, to reinforce neighborhood policy also for more security inside the EU, to make the EU more capable to compete with emerging powers”.



In the evening all participant enjoyed a dinner in the restaurant Nada (Vrbnk, Krka Island) overlooking the enchanting Adriatic see and the very beautiful songs of the famous Croatian tenor Voljen Grbac with his wife as a soprano.