

# 56<sup>th</sup> EJ International Congress Berlin, 17-20, October 2018 - Report



Journalists coming from all over Europe met in Berlin on 17-20 October 2018 for the 56<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the European Journalists Association - The Communication Network (EJ), organized in cooperation. Meetings for presentations, roundtables and discussions took place in the prestigious Representation of the worldwide well-known Bertelsmann Foundation in the German capital, located in the renowned “Unter den Linden”.

Taking into consideration the many problems and challenges that the European integration process is facing today, under the general title “There is a lot at stake - How do we shape the future of Europe?” the entire Congress’ work has been divided into four forums: “Europe: obligation”, aiming to focus on some of the triggers that should be considered today for European values and spirit; “Europe : roadworks”, intended to analyze a.o. the EU after Brexit, nationalism in Eastern Europe and other realities; “Europe: Values”, concentrated on the need to continue to construct the European projects on the basis of shared values and respect of rules, comprising the financial ones, but the member states; “Europe: Vision”, based on the panel with the participation of journalists of the several EU countries analyzing the media responds to the present problems weighing up the EU and possible perspectives; “Europe : economic chances”, with the purpose to get visions and needs expressed by businessmen regarding the expectance of the economy by Brussels; “Europe: Culture”, concentrated on the European cultural heritage as a lifeboat for Europe. In the evening of the arrival day, on Thursday 17, the participants were



*The president of the “Bundespressekonferenz” Gregor Mayntz welcomes and briefs the participants.*

welcomed at the Federal press conference (Bundespressekonferenz - BPK) by the chairman Dr. Gregor Mayntz. It has been a unique experience by several participants coming from outside Germany realizing that usually journalists invite politicians to a press conference and not, as it is common in many other countries and at EU level, the opposite.



*The EJ presidents Paolo Magagnotti introduces the meeting at the “Europäisches Haus”. In first row l>r: Marina Fietz, Spokes-woman Fed.Gov. Germany; Frank Piplat, manager EP Office; EJ VP Rotger Kindermann.*

The BPK is an association of journalists reporting for German and foreign media whose membership fee support financially the Conference.

At the Office of the European Parliament in Berlin (Europäisches Haus) the Office’s Director Frank Piplat and the Deputy Spokes-woman of Federal Government Martina Fietz, welcomed and addressed the participants.

Whereas Piplat presented an Outlook for the next European elections, underlining the need of communicating Europe in a

correct or complete way in order to let people know what the European Union really is and does, so that they can use the ballot paper more informed and aware, Fietz focused on chances offered by the European integration and consequent need to face with rationality and farsighted the challenges of our times.

Both speakers underlined the need to protect freedom of the press and to support professional journalism. A reception at the EP office followed.

On the following day the Congress was opened by the EJ President Paolo Magagnotti. After thanking the Bertelsmann Foundation, especially its "Program Europe's Future", the EP Berlin Office, the Representation of North Rhine-Westphalia to the Federal Government, the Swarco Group and expressing a special gratitude to the EJ Vice President Rotger Kinderman, for having been



*The Deputy Spokes-woman of Federal Government of Germany, Martina Fietz, and the EP Office manager Frank Piplat have briefed the participants.*

author and tireless organizer of the congress together with his wife Marita, Magagnotti made some introductory remarks, saying:

*“Once again, we are assembled to discuss about the future of the European Union.*

*Since our association was founded, we usually have discussed about a specific topic of European integration at our annual congress.*



*EJ President Paolo Magagnotti opens the Congress.*



*Christian Kastrop, Director of the „Programm Europas Zukunft“ of the Bertelsmann Stiftung.*

*In the last years, the wording of the titles of the Congresses has changed, but content and concern have remained practically the same: future, what the future of the Union will be? What can and should be done, how can we contribute as media people to shape the future of our dear Europe?*

*All this reflects of course a rising concern in front of the uncertainties which mark the path of the European integration. A European integration born as a far-sighted project strongly wanted by courageous founding fathers; a project that should keep the European people together also in difficult times.*

*Unfortunately, we must realize that, often, too often, when it comes to great challenges that would require sharing burdens, solidarity - the basic principle of European unity - is dampened and the governments of the member states **nail down**, thinking for themselves only, with the risk to*

*undermine the European project.*

*To this regard the epochal migrants' crisis of our times is a very sad **telling example** and, without suitable defense reactions, can take the European project to run a big risk.*

*The political leitmotif in some European countries is **national sovereignty**, an untouchable sovereignty above all, refusing any decision from outside the nation, even if there is a shared international treaty to be obeyed.*



*Speaking of national sovereignty as the highest attainment for a community of people in the today's word means thinking medieval.*

*Those who claim today the false national myth, tie their countries to the past, blocking to the young generations a future that can be assured by a European unity only.*

*It seems to go back to the seventeenth century when France and Cardinal Richelieu introduced the modern approach to international relations, based on the nation-state and motivated by national interest as its ultimate purpose.*

*What is worrying me a lot is the growing trend to*

*substitute in the international relations multilateralism – which was so important for the EU founding fathers -* Peter Huber, Ambassador of Austria, EU Council Presidency.

*with bilateralism, going back to the concept of “balance of power”, elaborated by Great Britain in the eighteen century and that dominated European diplomacy for 200 years.*

*The US President Donald Trump is a symbol of this dangerous approach and unfortunately a catalyst for some European countries*



*Elmar Brok, MEP.*

*too.” The eruption of populism, with a*

*pathologic nationalism, and the growing movement of the so-called Souverainisme within the EU, is a drifting mine for the European project.*

*And what about European representatives, heirs of political visions and principles of the EU founding fathers that realizing the widespread success in favor of Souverainists in some*



*Forum I – Europe : obligation. From l>r:Elmar Brok MEP, President Union Europäischer Förderalisten; Céline Diebold, Projektmanagerin Bertelsmann Stiftung; András Radetzky, Moderator; Katrin Böttger, Director of Institut für Europäische Politik.*



**Forum II – Europe : roadworks . From l>r: Manuel Sarrazin MdB, Spokesman for East European policy, Fraktion B'90/die Grünen; Ludmila Rakusan, Journalist, political witness; Gunther Krichbaum MdB, chairman of the committee for EU-Affairs of Deutscher Bundestag; Ralf Schneider, moderator.**

countries are flirting with them, instead of strongly fighting their Souverainisme, reviving hope in everlasting values.

*In a few months the Europeans will be faced with a choice: back to the past or further forward in the future.*

*The forthcoming European elections should force all those who still believe in the European project to use all their energies to lunch a crack-down on populism and Souverainisme and keep alive the European dream.*

*As the main title of our congress reminds us, "There is a lot at stake" that we should tackle to shape the future of our beloved Europe.*



*EJCongress' participants in the Bertlesmann Stiftung in Berlin.*



*It would be absurd, of course, to deny the need to introduce changes in the EU system, both institutionally and with regard to the relations with the citizens. We can change and need changes, of course, but not subversion of principles.*

*We have a very rich program today and tomorrow, with several topics to be analyzed.*

*I thank in advance the experts and colleagues for their contribution to a better understanding of visions, goals and structures that can foster a better, more united Europe.*

*In this context, dear colleagues, we should also consider our responsibilities as media people with regard to the European project.*

*Perhaps we should become aware of the fact that the media has not done enough to curb the spread of populism.*

*Not infrequently, though in an indirect way, they have generated resonance. Even the silence can sometimes be a support to populism.*

*We need communication strategies that make citizens aware that only a European Union that*



*Gianni Bonvicini*

*Forum III – Europe : values. From l>r: Michael Jäger, CEO, European Economic Senate; Gianni Bonvicini, Consultant and frm. Ex. VP Institut of International Affaires; Alexander Graf Lambsdorff MdB, Vice-Chairman of the Liberal Fraktion in the Germa Bundestag.*

*holds together and not a Europe with fragmented national states can face the challenges of the future, comprising the rising and strengthening of world elites, of which Bilderberg is just one worrying example.*

*Lets' hope that with this congress and the commitment of all of us to disseminate ideas and suggestions that it will provide, we will contribute to strengthen the spirit of the European unity."*

*EJ President Magagnotti presents to Graf Lambsdorff a bottle of Luxemburger vine "The Spirit of Schengen", a present for all the Congress' Speakers.*



Forum IV: Europe: Vision. From L>r: *Ewald König (AT), Paolo Magagnotti (IT), Katarzyna Pelka-Wolsztajn, Hendrik Schott(D), Pascal Thibaut (FR), Georgios Pappas (GR), Marc Willière (Lux).*

Representing the Bertelsmann Foundation, Cristian Kastrop, Foundation's Director of the „Programm Europas Zukunft“, set the framework for congressional communications.

Kastrop made a triggering greeting calling all Europeans to be more motivated in supporting the European project, pressing for a mobilization moved by emotional attitudes and not just rational one.

He outlined the present political and social context in EU in its worrying aspects and successes. Not only that we face Brexit but a wave of exit messages from different countries as well. Greece still has financial difficulties and Italy struggles as well. Tensions in Eastern Europe are worrying. Obviously, migration implies the need to resolve stressful situations. We are approaching the European Parliamentary elections, there are about 8 months until the elections, so we need to send emotional messages and not just rational ones, and to encourage people to go to vote. The real problem is the dynamics, the ratio between the rhythm of the situations created and the speed with which they occur. From this perspective, in Kastrop analysis, the European Union is still a machine that moves too slowly. More than that, he said, when facing international relations, one mistake now could cost EU ten to twenty years to repair it. In his opinion, first thing EU should do is to take care of the financial problems and afterwards the political issues. One very good news is that the pro-European principle enjoys a revival in public perceptions and the latest surveys show that the level of acceptance is close to the average registered at time of the formation of the Union.





The Ambassador of Austria to Berlin (Austria holds the presidency of the EU Council in the second semester 2018) Peer Huber, underlined the importance to promote as much as possible and strongly



a cooperation in Europe fostering mutual trust.

The opening ceremony was also marked by two messages sent by the president of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani and Maria Romana De Gasperi, daughter of the Italian founding father of European Union, Alcide De Gasperi, and Sven-Georg Adenauer, grandson of the German founding father of European Union Konrad Adenauer. The special EJ friend and strategic supporter [Manfred Swarovski](#) was commemorated.

The first forum, moderated by the Hungarian colleague András Radetzky, director of the network of Catholic radio broadcasters the Pázmány Péter Catholic with a presentation by Katrin for European Politic, who EU to become more democratic Céline Diebold, project manager Foundation indicated as basic network of the city partnership in



and teacher of journalism at University, was opened Böttger, Director of Institute underline the need for the and closer to the people. of the Bertelsmann foundation for the EU the Europe, which are, at the

present, in number of 20,000, with French being at the top with more than 6,500 partnerships. Creating a networking among municipal communities through partnership is a very important precondition for the development of important socio-economic project

too.

We should do important things, said MEP Elmar Brok in his address “Participation instead of observing – our historical responsibility”. Taking the point of view of the middle class average



citizen he said that we have a mismatch between job offer and labor market demand in EU. Youth unemployment is related to the lack of vocational education, said Elmar Brok. The competitiveness field should also be reconsidered. The pension system should be harmonized in the EU but this cannot yet be achieved because a Romanian citizen, for example, should contribute 3 times the amount of his salary to the pension fund. There are many issues pressing on the middle class and the media plays an overwhelming role in clarifying them both from the



perspective of citizens and European decisions. The issue of



migration was particularly emphasized by observing that the views that Germany could not financially support the integration of migrants are unrealistic. Media



representations about the migrants revealed numerous faults and shortcomings. Media narratives vary from hateful discourses to mild tolerance and enthusiast humanitarianism. As a result, a more

inclusive coverage of migration in the media is needed.

The second forum “Europe-roadwork” was introduced by the moderator Ralf Schneider, media consultant and vice president of the EJ German group VEJ and with **Gunther Krichbaum** MdB, chairman of the committee for EU-Affairs of Deutscher as first speaker. For him, all the member states must commit themselves more seriously to respect the rule of law. He sees the many violations of European rules that we register now as unacceptable.

The MdB underlined the fact that all data in countries that would like to join the European Union should be first of all and were of that responsibility and commitment to fulfil the three of Copenhagen criteria which are binding for entering the EU:1 - a stable and functioning democracy, respecting also minority groups; 2 - a functional market economy; 3 - acceptance of the “acquis communautaire”. The decision to apply for entering the European Union, he added, is a voluntary act, therefore no tolerance must be considered for those that don’t respect the rules. Regarding Eastern Europe, Krichbaum thinks that it will require for those countries to renounce nationalism.

We welcomed Eastern European countries with enthusiasm, said **Manuel Sarrazin** MdB, Spokesman for East European policy, Fraction B’90/die Grünen, but we need to realize the disillusionment by some of them. Everybody needs to be aware that solidarity does not mean just to receive but it requires also to give, whatever possible. Worries were expressed by Sazzarin about Russia, which with cynic attitude aims to create a problem in the European Union.

For **Ludmila Rakusanowa**, Czech Journalist and political witness, after the fall of the Berlin



Wall, Eastern European people entered the European Union and all thought that they conquered a lasting freedom; unfortunately we there is now worrying evidence of



resurgence of nationalism, which is not a good sign for Europe.

Moderated by **Michael Jäger**, Secretary-general of the EJ German group VEJ and CEO of European Economy Senate, the third forum, “Europe: values”, dealt with the very essence of values and principles at the basis of the origin of the European Union and the need to look at



Forum V – Europe : economic chances. From l>r: *Rotger H. Kindermann, EJ Vice-president; Horst Heitz, Secr.-Gen. SME Europe/EPP; Michael Jäger, CEO of the European Economic Senate; Florian Rentsch, Chairman of the Board of Sparda-Bank-Federation; Henning Krumrey, Head of communication & politics, ALBA-Group; Eberhard Vogt, Chief press officer, BV Mittelständische Wirtschaft; Ralf Schmitz, General manager, Verband Deutscher Metallhändler.*

once again according to values leading to a European unity based on the rule of law, democracy and solidarity, taking however in consideration the lessons of the present times.





**Gianni Bonvicini**, consultant of the Institute of International Affairs of Rome and its firm. Director General, said in his speech “European identity – desire or reality” that negotiations in EU Council are conducted so to increase the



amount of funding for NGOs that advocate EU policies in order diversify sources of information. He also said that media needs to contribute so civil society develops a desire to create, to have, a European identity. This is not just a legitimate need, but, as it is obvious in the results published by Pew Research Center in June 2018, public

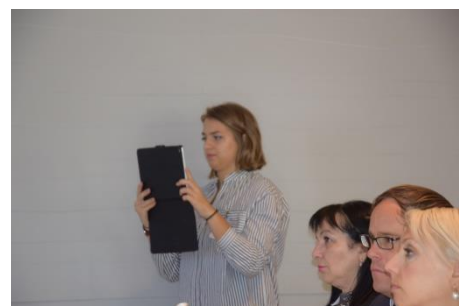
news media is also the most credible medium to convey news, information about the work of the European institutions. This analysis show that publicly-funded news media is more trusted than private media in Western Europe.



*Forum VI – Europe : culture. From l>r: Sebastian Körber, Vice Secr.-Gen. of the Institute for foreign relations; Enzo Farinella, writer; Sabine Geller, Editor in chief of “danubecconnect”; Albert Friggieri, Ambassador of Malta to Berlin.*

The research was conducted in 8 Western European countries. A stable and functioning European Union guaranteeing growth and development and social cohesion requires solid public finance and a robust Euro, said **Alexander Graf Lambsdorff** MdB, Vice-Chairman of the Liberal Fraction in the German Bundestag. The Lehman-crash, he

added, must warn both banks and public institutions against the risk of finance out-of-control. For the Eurozone the relevant EU institutions must be



unfixable in asking the governments to respect rules and decisions. Lambsdorff underlined in particular the fact that each member states must be responsible not just for themselves but also for the entire Union, being also aware that the consequences for an easy spending in

accounting must be paid also by citizens of other countries.

If the government of a Member States, he added further, requires respect of the European rules by another MS' government it makes at the same time the interest of that MS. For Graf Lambsdorff the idea of having a Minister of finance for the European Union is to be considered



positive, but if can be useful if te MS will confer to the minister enough power to operate concretely.

There is always a need for funding public media but maybe even more when the task is to use and present in an intelligent way the EU power of attraction. How can this goal be achieved? One solution offered by Count Lambsdorff was for each government to get EU financial support to invest in news or in-



depth analysis programs about EU agenda and to continue to educate journalists, so they can report impartially on European topics.

Animated has been the debate of the fourth forum, "Europe Vision", with a round table moderated by the president of the EJ German group VEJ and the teacher at the diplomatic school. International correspondence and EJ members talked about their own experience and responsibility also analyzing how media respond to a "stumbling" Europe. The



participant were: Ewald König (AT), Paolo Magagnotti (IT), Georgios Pappas (GR), Katarzyna Pelka-Wolsztajn (PL), Pascal Thibaut (FR), Marc Willière (LU).



All participants agreed about a certain responsibility by the media for the European integration process even if we need to consider the different attitudes in European countries.



Journalists shall inform of course about the European project, contributing to the understanding of the EU system, but without interfering in decisions belonging to the political sphere only.



**Tobias Pietz**, Deputy head of Zentrum für internationale Friedenseinsätze, presented briefly some scenarios related to situations where the lack of peace generates migration, the epochal phenomenon that is shaking the Western world. He took in consideration and analyze several conditions for stabilization and peacebuilding. Regarding initiative to face the challenges of migration he indicated the initiative “Mare nostrum” are quite successful project.

Quite interesting with national and global considerations and analysis was the fifth forum economic chances”, introduced and moderated H. Kindermann, EJ vice president and one on a the EJ German group Participants at the panel



“Europe: by Rotger president of VEJ.

were: **Horst**



**Heitz**, secretary-general of SME Europe/EPP; **Michael Jäger**, secretary-general of the Taxpayers Assoc. of Europe; **Henning Krumrey**, Head of communication & politics, ALBA-Group; **Florian Rentsch**, Chairman of the Board of Sparda-Bank-Federation; **Ralf Schmitz**, General manager, Verband Deutscher Metallhändler; **Eberhard Vogt**, Chief press officer, BV Mittelständische Wirtschaft.

Special focus was put by all the speakers on the importance of both of the Small and Medium-size Enterprises, which, in addition to the important for the economic controls can play a special role on a social level. However, we need also larger companies which, like in the metal sector, they have an important role.

Important can be the connections between SMEs and larger companies since such connection playing in several cases a complementary role.

The last forum. The 6<sup>th</sup> focused on “Europe and Culture”.

**Sebastian Körber**, Vice General Secretary of the Institute for foreign relations, underlined the importance of the European



cultural heritage to shape our future, considering it a "lifeboat" for Europe .

The ambassador of Malta **Albert Friggieri**, made quite an interesting presentation on La Valetta as European culture capital 2018.

Presented meaningful monuments and recordings often unknown events characterizing the history of the beautiful island the Ambassador highlighted the fact that discovering La Valetta means to discover the very European genotype.



*Volker Ratzmann, Secretary of State of Baden-Württemberg briefing Congress' participants.*



*EJ VP R. Kindermann*

With the quite interesting set back into the history Ento Farinella highlighted the influence of Irish

monks monks on European culture.

**Sabine Geller**, editor-in-chief of the magazine "danube connects" presented in a very stimulating way the history of important woman, from Maria Theresia to Sophie Scholl, who left historical signs along the Danube river.

Participants at the Berlin Congress had the opportunity to meet and ask questions at the representations of two German Bundesländer, Baden-Württemberg

for a discussion with Secretary of State Volker Ratzmann and North Rhine-Westphalia where our host was Secretary of State for Federal and European Affairs, Mark Speich. In our multilingual Europe, we are aware that regional development differences, economic and cultural history roots are still obvious in present day social, political and economic decisions. Without considering a worked-out vein but, still, a source of inspiration, cultural differences and views enrich us as we continue to develop transnational projects.

Europe reveals itself to be very young when Eastern and Western perspectives are shared and



*Marc Speich, Secretary of State for Federal and European Affairs of NRW briefing the Congress' participants.*





the EU concept seem to be a teenager full of energy and appetency to grow into a flexible, multi-engine Europe.



Berlin Wall

Visit to the "Berlin Castle" guided by Konrad Freytag

Symbols of Berlin were visited on a city tour from Berlin Wall – Docu – center to Ku-Damm, Reichstag and the Holocaust memorial. grandparents are represented in all of humankind and the capacity of people build up new hopes from the ashes of history. Seeing youngsters aware of past opened mind, enjoying the fruits of the have had, integrating with serenity in Holocaust memorial one must feel encouraged to believe that the EU concept is the just one for present times and the right



A history lived by our parents and places reminding us of the abyss to overcome disastrous times and most sinister moments in our mistakes with a bright and longest period of peace Europe their everyday life places like the one for future development.

As the gathering came to a Association were invited October morning, to share few "Französischer Dom". As we suspendu" of Jehan Alain for Nauhaus, introduced us in the times when the notion of a garden was related to the idea of supreme human happiness, when gardens were considered "heaven on earth". Is Europe now such a garden for its citizens? More than a question, an inspiration for striving for a better



close, members of the EJ Sunday, on the 20th of peaceful moments in the all set down, "Le jardin organ, played by Kilian



Everybody walking in Berlin on Reinhardtstraße an any moment can realize in real time the public debt in Germany.

society was the service delivered by Rev. dr. **Matthias Loerbroks**. He reminded all of us that in the context of high anxiety and foreseeable great periods of change in the world we must give



*A due thank to the organizer of the memorable 2018 EJ Congress Rotger Kindermann, with his wife Marita.*

way to hope and faith in humanity, to build a strong community for an open, creative future. Ode of Joy sounded majestic and full of optimism at the end of a service dedicated to a time of meditation for peace.



*And a special thank to Dagmar Kayser-Passmann for the photoservice of the entire Congress, and of previous congresses too.*

In a nutshell, what was said at the 56<sup>th</sup> European Journalists Congress is that participation, local responsibility and serving a common goal that is making EU an even more competitive and attractive construction is the key for our success in the future. There are many major areas regarding EU administration that media still need to comprehend. There are still many areas where professional intervention in the inner mechanism of media is required. Perhaps the most important thing to underline from the experience of the Congress in Berlin is that, repeatedly, specialists in various fields, from financial to diplomacy, politicians and journalists have noticed that there is still a great need for an in-depth understanding of what the European Union means, the way in which it works, as a first condition to convey a simplified but complete message, easy to understand for the general public.

**Report by Paolo Magagnotti, Felicia Ristea and Francesca Cristoforetti**



