

## Introduction : Rune Rydén

(words in red : translation of the spoken French text)

Dear Friends,

I declare this extra ordinary meeting on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of our Association open.

Let me start by saying a few words in **French** as we are guests in Assemblée Nationale.

Dear Madame Speaker, Dear Colleagues,

A harthly welcome on the extra-ordinary session here in Paris at the Assemblée nationale, office of our European association, on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our association.

I particularly thank Madame Bureau-Bonnard, Vice-President of the Assemblée nationale, to honour us with your presence and for the hospitality of the Assemblée nationale.

“Excuséz-moi” for switching back into English.

Our association is now 25 year old, and has found a function that we can be proud of.

The first line in the document about our history reads: On the occasion of the General Assembly of the Belgian Association of former members of Parliament, in Bruges in 1984, members of Belgian, Germany, France and Italy talked about future collaboration. It was agreed that they should meet once a year.

Ten years later in 1994, this group, which had been joined by Turkey in 1988, created officially:

**“The European Association of former members of parliament of the member states of the Council of Europe.”**

Which we now often refer to-in short form-as FP-AP.

Thus, 1994 is our official birth year. Only a few years before dramatic changes had happened in the history of Europe. Once divided we were now looking at

a more united and open Europe. The creation of our association was natural at that time. We former parliamentarians could make many new connections between our countries and by that increase our knowledge about each other. Geographically, Europe is divided. There are mountains, rivers and waters that divide us.

That has been an advantage in some respects but also a draw back. During the centuries there have been many conflicts between the people and nations of Europe. Hopefully, all that is behind us. As our colleague Walter Schwimmer said in our colloquy in Strasbourg last year. **No more wars!**

That knowledge must be transferred to generations to come.

The best way of doing that is to have more contacts between us which lead to a better knowledge and an increased understanding of each other.

That is an important mission for all of us.

Also our experiences must be transferred to the next generation. Some of us are teaching in schools and universities, and tell our history.

We, the FP-AP, are very active as well, and have for instance a Colloquy every second year. Last time, we discussed the **Future of Europe**.

The Future of Europe should be peaceful and good!

Good relations are a prerequisite to continue our work successfully.

And today let us first of all celebrate our **25<sup>th</sup> anniversary**.

Before I give the floor to Madame Bureau-Bonnard I want to introduce her with a few words.

She is a trained physiotherapist and in 2010 she became deputy mayor of Noyon- sur- Seine, a city about 100 km northwest of Paris. Noyon has a rich history that goes back a long way. She became Vice Presidente of the community of the communes of the Noyonnais County.

In 2017 she was elected Member of Parliament for “La République en marche”

28th of June 2017 she was elected Vice President of the Assemblée Nationale and Commissionaire of the Defense. In this capacity she replaced in only one week Mr. Ruge when he became minister of the government.

And now: **I give the word to Madame Bureau- Bonnard.**

**Madame Bureau-Bonnard, thank you for this nice words !**

I would like to thank Madame Bureau- Bonnard for the kind words and also bring our best regards to the President, who informed us that he had to go abroad and thus could not attend our meeting today.

The President of our French Association, Emile Blessig has also sent us a letter regretting that he could not attend our anniversary because of another important assignment.