



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **European Foundation Centre celebrates 20 years of “Moving European Philanthropy Forward”**

Some 200 representatives of foundations from around the world gathered for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Foundation Centre (EFC) at the “Moving European Philanthropy Forward” conference held 9-10 November in Berlin. European Commission President José Manuel Barroso welcomed the delegates through a video message, saying that: “I believe in a Europe of openness, this is the Europe I want, and I believe that European foundations have a great role in this Europe of openness, solidarity and responsibility.”

Twenty years on from the establishment of the EFC and the fall of the Berlin Wall, this anniversary conference honoured the founders of the EFC and traced the history of the Centre since its establishment on 9 November 1989. The gathering went further to look at what the Centre will aim to achieve in the next twenty years both in terms of shaping European philanthropy and of contributing to the development of the European project. The conference took place at the Brandenburgische Akademie Der Wissenschaften, supported by EFC members Bertelsmann Stiftung, Körber Stiftung, Robert Bosch Stiftung and Volkswagen Stiftung.

In his opening remarks, Emílio Rui Vilar, EFC Chair and President of Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, said that the positive setting of Berlin two decades after the fall of the Wall was a fitting backdrop to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the EFC: “The fall of the Wall conveys the spirit of inclusiveness which the EFC developed right from the beginning in its approach.”

Günter Stock, President of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, spoke of foundations’ role in the European Research Area (ERA) as an example of the crucial contribution of philanthropy to Europe. He spoke directly to foundations, saying that the ERA: “will not work without your initiative, your ideas and finally your direct support: Your influence and support are a lifeline to the sciences.”

At the Opening, Richard von Weizsäcker, German Federal President at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and Janusz Reiter, Former Polish Ambassador to the United States, joined a roundtable discussion on the topic of civil society engagement in the European Union over the past two decades.

During the conference, foundation leaders from across Europe also debated the role foundations can play in dealing with the challenges facing the continent. Regarding external relations, panellists said that although Europe must look outward and improve relations with India and China, it cannot ignore its immediate neighbours such as Russia, the relationship with which is far less clear than it was even ten years ago. There was also a feeling that democracy has regressed in some eastern European countries. Civil society and foundations in particular can play a role in dealing with these issues and many others with their expertise, independence, and convening powers. There was a recognition that the Lisbon Treaty will create new opportunities for European foundations to contribute to the European project.

Another frequently discussed issue was the financial crisis and how foundations can use it as an a

chance to come into their own and increase their role in European society, while being aware of the changes in government policies that the crisis might bring.

The conference also included a panel discussion of EFC founding members and their contemporaries around the theme of “1989 to present: Where have we come from?” The debate was moderated by Diana Leat, of The Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund. EFC members crucial to the establishment of the Centre looked back on the history of the institution, and spoke of the needs that brought the Centre about. Francis Charhon of Fondation de France said: “The idea of the founders was not a technical project, but to create a dynamic for something that would improve civil society”.

Carlos Monjardino of Fundação Oriente noted that at the time there was a need, “...to start a dialogue with Brussels and to keep it going and try to influence European policy.”

Raymond Georis, Founding EFC Chair, spoke about his wishes for the future of European foundations, “My dream is that they really continue to be adventurous and remain open to the outside world.” Further sessions included “Perspectives for the Future – Europe in 2029”.

From a modest group of 7 members in 1989, the EFC has expanded to incorporate 227 members worldwide, from Belgium to Bulgaria, and from Jordan to Japan, with a significant increase in membership in the last 3 years.

The majority of EFC members originate from Europe, though the entire EFC membership includes foundations from 40 countries around the world. Some 33 funders are from 8 countries outside Europe. EFC members, which include some of Europe’s biggest foundations, collectively manage over €140 billion in assets and have a total annual expenditure of over €7.7 billion.

To date there are no less than 95,000 public-benefit foundations across 24 EU Member States (information not yet available for Lithuania, Malta and Romania), which represents an average of 20 foundations per 100,000 inhabitants. Of the significantly higher number of organisations labelled as foundations across these countries, 273,000, more than one third are public-benefit foundations.

Foundations in the EU have seen dramatic growth over the past 15 years. In 9 countries (Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden), 43% of foundations were set up during the last period surveyed. Noticeable examples of this growth include:

- Slovakia: increase from 103 to 338 foundations over ten years. This mainly reflects legislative changes in 2002 which required pre-registration of all foundations
- Italy: the number of foundations increased by 133%. Since the 1990 Amato Law was introduced, 90 foundations of banking origin were set up
- Germany: an increase of 103% of independent foundations

As noted by one of the EFC founding fathers, Carlos Monjardino of Fundação Oriente, at the first AGA and Conference in November 1990, the EFC had to “play an unforeseen role” in assisting Central and Eastern European countries given the historic events that had taken place. Twenty years later, the EFC continues to develop initiatives to encourage foundations from this region to join the Centre. One such initiative is the Grantmakers East Forum (GEF) which promotes the development of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union states by providing funders active in the region with a forum to discuss effectiveness of their grantmaking efforts, exchange experience, get inspired and encourage new donor activity in the region. This year’s Forum will take place in Berlin directly after the EFC 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference.

The EFC increases its representation to thousands of European foundations through its association with the Donors and Foundations’ Networks in Europe (DAFNE) which was established in 2006. The DAFNE network aims at linking different donors and foundations’ networks (DFNs) in Europe and serving charitable foundations and other grantmakers at the national level. DAFNE provides a platform for enhancing bilateral and multilateral collaboration among individual DFNs and also, collectively, with the EFC and third parties. This network and collaboration with the EFC contributes to strengthening the voice and the representation of the views of this sector at a European level.

For more information about the EFC and its members please see: [www.efc.be](http://www.efc.be)  
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