

16273

**22<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Assembly and Conference  
European Foundation Centre**

**Closing Plenary  
Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> May**

Dear Colleagues,  
Dear Friends,

For this AGA and Conference we proposed to you the Ocean as the source of inspiration for our theme – Resources and Sustainability. The weather was the image of the context in which foundations operate. Some days were sunny and hopeful, others were cloudy and stormy. Foundations must be prepared for all seasons.

Over the last 3 days there have been interesting discussions and some surprising events. We must thank the Mayor of Cascais for his hospitality including for the show laid on for us at the Estoril Casino. There have been quite diverse comments about it but we know, too, not to look a gift horse in the mouth even when it comes down from the ceiling.

Our annual conference has shown that foundations within and outside Europe are better prepared and willing to provide effective answers to the gigantic challenges the world faces today. From the environment to democracy,

from human development to social innovation, from poverty reduction to education and science, foundations have demonstrated that they can be key players. Working in partnership with the other sectors, foundations can contribute to deliver innovative solutions to new and old problems. As the President of the Portuguese Republic clearly stated in the opening plenary, the States alone cannot address all social needs and foundations and other civil society organizations have to play an increasingly role in the public good arena. Cooperation and partnerships are essential to set dimension and impact but all the players have to be very conscious about the intrinsic boundaries of the specific roles they have to play. Particularly, with scarce resources, overlapping is a danger we have to avoid and instead we should work to find the right balance of having a shared agenda and try to set more than the mere arithmetic sum of the parts.

The European Foundation Centre, as the major convening body for European foundations, can and should work as a philanthropy powerhouse, streamlining the challenges and opportunities for our philanthropic action. The newly adopted strategic plan for 2011 through 2016 just lays the needed grounds for this responsibility. The plan paves the way for redefining membership, realigning external relations, and revising the governance and structure of the European foundation movement. In the volatile contexts in which we work it creates the conditions for keeping pace and getting ahead. The Foundation Council of Europe, which brings together the two pillars of foundations in Europe – the Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe (DAFNE) and the EFC - is a sound governance arrangement that will represent more than 5000 major

European foundations. This new bi-cameral system does not mean that we will lose our identity. EFC and DAFNE have different DNA's but European foundations and their umbrella organizations must cooperate and have a stronger single voice in our relation with the EU, national governments and the public opinion.

This new institutional architecture could therefore be used to strengthen our advocacy efforts towards the adoption of the European Foundation Statute. We have to step up our efforts at national level to ensure passage of the European Foundation Statute by all Member States, which will review the Commission's proposal next year.

Another issue that I would like to draw your attention to will be the subject of the first autumn assembly of the Foundation Council of Europe, this October, is the permanent quest for foundations legitimacy. The answer to this question will help to define the level of autonomy with which we will operate, nationally and internationally. I believe foundation's legitimacy does not spring only from our public benefit mission. The public trust of foundations must be a matter of our permanent attention. We have to add a sound governance structure, with clear and adequate checks and balances, as well as transparent and effective compliance.

Dear friends,

Allow me a personal note. To me, chairing the EFC has been a very challenging and rewarding experience. I learnt

a lot and I benefited from the example of my predecessors, Dario, Dan and Wilhelm. If I could add something, I owe it all to the active participation of the EFC members, to our colleagues at the Governing Council and at the Management Committee, as well as to the competence and dedication of our secretariat, lead by Gerry Salole. And also to my colleagues at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and to my Cabinet team lead by Rui Esgaio. You all deserve my gratitude.

I will now handover the chairmanship to my successor, Marco Parlangei. Marco does not need to be presented. You all know him too well. Marco was an excellent treasurer of the EFC and has accumulated a vast and valuable experience as chief executive of a big Italian foundation with rich historical roots. I believe Marco will contribute for an effective and resilient EFC. I wish him good luck!

Thank you.

Emílio Rui Vilar