

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

To close what I hope you have found to be a constructive and useful conference, I am now delighted to present to you Avv. Giuseppe Guzzetti, President of Associazione di Fondazioni e di Casse di Risparmio (ACRI) and of Fondazione Cariplo. Our Italian colleagues will certainly be familiar with Avv. Guzzetti, given that he has been on the frontlines of every major battle for the rights of independent foundations of banking origin since their creation. His support for the EFC has also been a major factor in the large increase of Italian members which the Centre has experienced over the past three years. For those who have heard Avv. Guzzetti speak before, and for those who are less familiar, I am delighted that he has accepted this invitation to close the conference, and am pleased to welcome him to the podium.

We now arrive at one of the highlights of the Annual General Assembly and Conference: the awarding of the Raymond Georis Prize for Innovative Philanthropy in Europe, which was established by the Network of European Foundations' Mercator Fund. 2009 marks the sixth year that the prize has been awarded.

Turning to another prize, it is now time to share the results of the 2009 European Foundation Centre Photo Competition. Past winners of this prize include the Bernard van Leer Foundation and Fondation de France, so the winning organisation will certainly be in good company. I am pleased to introduce to you Ms Bente Roalsvig of Institujonen Fritt Ord, who will reveal the results of this week's voting.

I hope you have found the last several days constructive and that you are leaving Rome with some new ideas, contacts, and perspectives. If I may share my impressions of the conference, I must say I was most struck by the sophisticated manner that European foundations are now choosing to engage with each other. The days of focusing only on what was happening in our own backyards seem to be a thing of the past. The European Foundation Centre currently has over 230 members in 40 countries, and 64% of these members say that they are working actively across borders. This growing inclination towards cooperation was palpable this week as I witnessed foundations rallying together around key issues: climate, youth, migration, and poverty, just to name a few.

New concepts of collaboration are also developing, such as the idea of establishing a 'Foundation House' in Brussels in the coming years. Initially, it is planned that this will be home to the European Foundation Centre, European Venture Philanthropy Association, and the Network of European Foundations for Innovative Cooperation. Such an arrangement will not only be conducive to the strengthening of relationships and infrastructure, but will also allow for the pooling and sharing of administrative costs. This maturing collaborative spirit has important bi-products, as it raises the visibility of our sector, and cultivates the sense of a truly strong European philanthropic community.

Such a community is what we hope to display in Brussels next year, as we change the format of the Annual General Assembly and Conference and return the event to the capital of Europe and the home base of the EFC Secretariat. Rather than the typical three day Annual General Assembly and Conference that you have become accustomed to, the 2010 event will be structured as a 'Foundations Week', which will serve as a marketplace of ideas for participants, and will allow for strategic engagement with the EU institutions and other key Europe-wide bodies. We hope that reinventing our annual gathering will encourage the sharing of fresh perspectives that will allow us to reengage for the global public good and to demonstrate that foundations should be recognised as key players in the European project. Such recognition is required if we are able to

continue pushing for the issues that matter to our sector, such as the European Foundation Statute and the treatment of public benefit foundations with regards to Value Added Tax (VAT).

Another event on the horizon is the 20th anniversary celebration of the EFC, which is set to take place in Berlin this November on the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The purpose of the event is not only to commemorate those who have shaped the twenty year history of our organisation and to discuss how the sector has evolved in this period, but also to look forward at the challenges and opportunities which are on our doorsteps.

As we strive to improve our events, your honest feedback is most valuable. This week we have received several strong comments in reaction to the luxurious surroundings that have surrounded us. Please believe it when we say that the irony has not gone unnoticed that we gathered in a five star hotel to discuss poverty. While we are always restricted in our choice of venue due to the size of the Annual General Assembly and Conference, we also resign ourselves to the fact that one has to compromise for a greater good, and believe that all of us meeting in Rome outweighs the ostentation of the venue. Your feedback has however been duly noted and is already being taken into consideration as we launch into plans for 2010.

At the opening plenary of this conference, I noted the changed situation that foundations are facing now as compared to the last Annual General Assembly and Conference in Istanbul. Over the past twelve months we have all learned the hard way that we cannot predict what the future has in store for us. Therefore as we leave Rome, I urge you not to forget the ideas and partners that you have developed during these past days; but rather to continue to build upon the momentum and feeling of community that has been fostered. The financial crisis is still evolving, and there is shared uncertainty about its eventual scope, impact, and duration. The crisis, coupled

with the complex global challenges we face, demand humility and cohesion on our parts as we move forward. Judging from your overwhelming enthusiasm this week, I believe we are on the right track.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank once more our outstanding Italian hosts for their hospitality. I hope you may find the time to enjoy some of this magnificent city, and wish you a pleasant journey back home.

Thank you.

Dr Emílio Rui Vilar

Chair, European Foundation Centre

President of the Board of Trustees, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian