



**European Movement
Mouvement Européen**

**"Our generation is entrusted with » carrying on with the achievements of 1948,
says European Movement President Pat Cox**

This Friday morning at the Nieuwe Kerk in The Hague, Mr Pat Cox, President of the European Movement opened the celebrations for the sixtieth anniversary of the Congress of Europe. This event commemorating a fundamental moment in the process of European integration is resolutely facing into the future with the participation of some 500 delegates of organisations representing civil society, drawn from over forty different countries and invited to find « 60 ideas for Europe ».

“Our generation is entrusted with continuing on” explained Mr Cox, former President of the European Parliament, opening the proceeding in the presence of Prince Constantine of the Netherlands. A clear continuity was signalled by the presence of the head of the Dutch royal family given that the Congress of 1948 was attended by Princess Juliana and Prince Bernhard.

In his introductory message, the President of the European Movement, Mr Pat Cox, reminded the delegates of the principal message of the Congress of 1948: “Europe is under threat, divided, and the greatest threat comes from its very divisions”. From this message, the Council of Europe was born shortly afterwards: “The time has come to take an action commensurate to the dangers”; in other words, to unite the European peoples because “Europe’s destiny and world peace depend upon it”.

In the subsequent sixty years, much has been achieved, explained Mr Cox, and the European dream of The Hague has solidified in the legal, democratic and institutional fields. Nonetheless, there is more to do : the time has come, the EMI president explained, for Europe to take root in the area of civil society – not only in the political, economic and intellectual elites – in order that citizens may adopt the European dream and shape the Europe of the future that they desire. On this point, Prince Constantine recognized the work achieved by the organisations active at a civil society level, where “pragmatic integration” takes place, showing that on the European level “a lot goes on outside Brussels”.

“We the people” must become the catalyst of the European idea and the ideal it still represents, concluded Mr Cox, while getting the work of the European Civil Society Forum underway. The Forum will run until Saturday evening, and sixty good ideas for the future will be decided on the basis of the participants’ votes.

Michel Theys
The Hague, Saturday May 24th 2008

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Results and Reactions to the ideas debated at the Congress of Europe

Classes in European civic education in schools and banking on “*education from kindergarten onwards to create a sense of belonging*” to the European Union: this is just one of the sixty ideas brainstormed by the European Movement at the sixtieth anniversary celebrations of the Congress of Europe.

During Saturday’s plenary session at the Nieuwe Kerk in The Hague, in the presence of the Crown Prince of the Netherlands Willem-Alexander, the representatives of the European institutions were informed of the twenty ideas that had been selected by each of the three workshops on Friday afternoon. The “Political Europe” workshop focused above all on the need to fight climate change; to give a voice to the EU on the international stage, particularly at the UN ; and to protect citizen’s rights in the framework of an energised European democracy. In “Economic and Social” Europe, participants were more concerned with well-being than with economic growth and asked for an increased role for women in the economy in order to stimulate innovation. In response to concerns about the rise in immigration, several participants asked that the EU provide aid to countries of origin to contain the migration flux. As regards “Education and Cultural Europe” the emphasis was on highlighting Europe in the school curricula in order that the idea of belonging to a European agglomerate might be inculcated early on. A few people also insisted on the development of a European heritage listing and for Europe to develop a presence on television, as local TV stations have an important role to play in this question.

« We cannot look towards the future until we are aware of everything that has been accomplished » expounded the President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, at the opening of the political debate moderated by the EMI President Pat Cox, former President of the European Parliament and also former journalist. “We must thank all those who, sixty years ago, launched the concept and the ideas that have allowed us to reach today’s unity” declared Janez Jansa for his part, which allowed the acting President of the European Council to remind the audience that at the time of the original Congress, Europe was divided by the “Iron Curtain”. As for José Manuel Barroso, he underlined that he had been a member of the European Movement for several years and quoted one of the protagonists of the 1948 Congress, the Swiss thinker Denis de Rougemont, as saying that Europe should find “unity in diversity”. The President of the Commission noted that we could also add that Europe should have an “identity but that it should not be homogenous”. President Barroso declared himself to be resolutely “optimistic” for the future insofar as “there is no other region in the world where there is so much transnational cooperation” in the framework of a ‘community of values’ that is not restricted to an economic market.



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The President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Lluís Maria de Puig also noted that his organisation was a result of the Congress of Europe and that he was participating in the celebrations of a “dream that had come true”. The President of the Economic and Social Committee, Dimitris Dimitriadis invited Europeans to roll up their sleeves and get to work, as Europe cannot remain an oasis of calm in the current global crisis, and representatives of business need to become involved in the inner circles of European politics in order to bring a breath of fresh air into the EU. Luc van den Brande, President of the Committee of the Regions, ended by stating that Europe is a composite of shared responsibility at all levels of government – local, regional, national and European – and on equal footing and not biased by a hierarchical pyramid which goes against the principles of good government.

Michel Theys
La Haye, samedi 24 mai 2008

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