

EUROPEAN FREE ALLIANCE: VOICE OF THE PEOPLES OF EUROPE

THE FIRST 25 YEARS OF HISTORY (1981-2006)

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Preface

NELLY MAES

President of EFA, European Political Party

Twenty-five years ago, nine partners signed the Declaration of the Convention of Brussels (July 9, 1981), thus founding the EUROPEAN FREE ALLIANCE (EFA). Today we are proud to present the first book chronicling a quarter century of history. Moreover, this book has also been the impetus to launch a broader study on regionalism and democratic nationalism in Europe.

Shortly after the first direct elections to the European Parliament, the basic principles for the creation of the European Free Alliance were recorded in the Declaration of Bastia (1979). The main focus of this document was the building of a Europe of the Peoples, who were to have their own identity and inalienable rights.

At the time, the nine signatories also expressed their satisfaction with the newly acquired statute of the Basques, the Catalonians and the Galicians. The alliance became a genuine European party in Barcelona in 2004 and the 33 parties of the European Free Alliance were very enthusiastic to find that the Catalonians have recently taken a further step towards greater autonomy and a new statute.

SNP and Plaid Cymru were the driving forces behind the establishment of, respectively, the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments. In Belgium, the VU was able to exact new concessions with regard to increased autonomy for Flanders and the other regions every time the party participated in government.

Up until 1993, the Greek government stubbornly refused to recognise the party that represents the Macedonians in Greece. Intensive lobbying on behalf of the EFA finally made the Greeks give in so the Rainbow Party-Vinozitho could participate in future elections.

To this day and in spite of two convictions by the Strasbourg Court, the Bulgarian government still refuses to recognise the Omo-Pirin party, which represents the Macedonian minority in the country. The oppression and the denial of the rights of numerous communities and minorities constitutes a major challenge in various old and new member states.

“The EFA seeks to consign to the history books all injustice with regard to languages and communities, minorities and stateless nations.”

A European Union that merely recognises the rights of states cannot lead to true democracy and lasting peace. The denial of the rights of peoples and regions, of their language and

culture and of their right to self-determination remains a source of frustration and dispute in many European states and abroad.

On the other hand, the narrow-mindedness and self-interest of the member states are preventing Europe from becoming a true champion of human rights, development and peace on a global scale.

Free peoples who can experience their own identity as a nation, a region or a language community and who work together to create the democratic institutions that shape the European Union politically: that is the dream of the European Free Alliance.

We want to realise this dream through peaceful and democratic political action rather than resorting to violence. We do not aspire to a centralised European super state, but neither will we be satisfied with a European Union that only exists as a market and that stands divided and impotent when human rights and international law are being violated, or when poverty, war and environmental disasters threaten the lives of millions. Neither will we accept a European Union that looks down on small countries and constitutional regions while allowing the larger member states or the economic and military superpowers to dictate the law.

If Europe wants to be a major player, then it will have to bring together and harness all these resources. It is our task to create the institutions and generate the means to achieve this goal while also ensuring the continued existence of our own individuality.

That is why we choose to join forces in the European Free Alliance and why we show solidarity with all who wish to aspire to the peaceful coexistence of the peoples of the world.

The road between
Strasbourg and Brussels:
the European Free Alliance
(1981-2006)

MATHIEU VANHAELEWYN

ADVN-Centre for Archives, Documentation and Research

FORZA PARIS!

"Forza Paris!" (Let us work together!) Thus Michele Columbu ended his opening speech at the EFA meeting of May, 1988 in Sardinia, ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10955(2/1): Minutes Rainbow Group meeting of May 2-4, 1988 in Sardinia, p. 1.

L'union fait la force
Ici c'est la vie en rose
But they don't accept us
The way we are

(TC MATIC, 1981)

The European visionaries decided that difference is not a threat, difference is natural. Difference is of the essence of humanity. Difference is an accident of birth and it should therefore never be the source of hatred or conflict. The answer to difference is to respect it. Therein lies a most fundamental principle of peace – respect for diversity.

(JOHN HUME, WINNER OF THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE 1998)

J. Hume, "Nobel Lecture", Oslo, December 10, 1998,
<http://nobelprize.org/peace/laureates/1998/hume-lecture.html>.

*The cultural wealth of Europe lies in diversity, not uniformity.
It is positive that the peoples of Europe feel European but the imposition
of any kind of common cultural denominator would be negative,
even dangerous.*

(JOSÉ SARAMAGO, WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE 1998)

<http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/3/7/2199>.

(...) Que aqui se unen y hablan pueblos dialogantes
Que aqui cruzan sus palabras contrastantes
En un foro de libertad insuperable (...)

(SONNET DEDICATED TO BEGOÑA LASAGABASTER, SARDINIA MAY 3, 1988)

ADV N, BE ADV N AC652, EFA Fonds, D10968(3/1): "Soneto riposo-politico, en versos no medidos, dedicado a la amabilidad de Begoña en un dulce atardeler sardo".

MATHIEU VANHAELEWYN read history at the University of Ghent. He wrote his contribution on the history on EFA as a scientific researcher for the ADVN.

The ADVN (www.advn.be) was founded in 1984 in Antwerp as a private independent scientific institute. It is recognized by decree and funded by the Flemish Community.

The institute has an archival, documentation and research assignment concerning nationalism and national movements in general, and Flemish nationalism and the Flemish movement in particular. It collects, preserves and describes on those subjects all sorts of historical sources (archives, books, periodicals, photographs, films, tapes a.s.o.). These are made available, general and specific regulations permitting, for research in its reading-room. They are also used for publications and exhibitions and for media-purposes.

The institute does scientific research on all theoretical, general and specialized topics in the field of nationalism. It also partakes in a number of state-funded database-projects, like Archiefbank Vlaanderen – the register for private archives in Flanders (www.archiefbank.be).

The ADVN publishes the results of its research through conferences, exhibitions and publications. It also publishes *Wetenschappelijke tijdingen*, the leading scientific journal on the history of the Flemish movement.

To put to use on a European scale the expertise it build up over a period of twenty years, the ADVN is developing the NISE-database, a scientific data- and archival project (www.nise.be).

NISE aims to make a systematic effort to centralise and validate all information concerning the nationalist and regionalist movements in Europe and to help collect, preserve and describe for scientific purposes, the archives and documentation of the organisations and persons linked with them.

Concurrently, there is a want of advice and other assistance concerning the preservation and valorization of those source-materials. NISE proposes to organise such a retrieval and linking of information and source-material, along with archival assistance, on a European scale with the help of a web-database and a helpdesk.

Introduction

On May 8, 1945, the BBC World Service broadcast the capitulation of Nazi Germany to the whole world. Europe celebrated the end of the Second World War, a war which had devastated the Continent. Five years after Victory in Europe Day (VE Day), on May 9, 1950, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Robert Schuman, read a declaration which is now regarded as the document which later gave birth to the European Union.⁵ The European association for which Schuman was calling was clearly motivated by the thought of peace. Initially, only a number of countries formed part of this supranational association which was limited as far as the transfer of powers was concerned. These initial steps would result in the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952. At the Conference of Messina (Sicily) in 1955, the six ECSC countries decided to draw up the text for a Treaty, which resulted in the Treaties of Rome (March 25, 1957). With the signing of the latter, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany formed the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) and the European Economic Community (EEC). The economic integration of Europe continued to progress and resulted in the prospect of a single market which was proposed by the European Act and which came into effect in 1993. Six years later, the single European currency became a reality.

With the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), consideration was also given to a European Political Union. The EEC was given a new name: the European Community (EC), which formed part of the European Union (EU). More and more member states joined the EU at various stages: United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland in 1973; Greece in 1981; Portugal and Spain in 1986; and Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995.⁶ Provisionally the last and up until now the greatest expansion occurred on May 1, 2004 with the accession of ten mainly Central and East European countries: Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Cyprus and Malta. The number of European member states had thus doubled in barely a decade. In the meantime, a draft European Constitution has been produced, which could lead to more unity, more Europe.⁷ After the French and Dutch populations rejected the Constitution in referenda held in 2005, the project was suspended. This shows that opinions regarding the nature and purpose of European integration differ.⁸ It is one of the signs of the uncertainty which has prevailed since ‘Maastricht’ and which has displaced earlier European euphoria.⁹

European integration is placing a strain on the nation state: Europe is assuming more and more power. However, the nation state is not only being fragmented from above;

its power is also being eroded from below: stateless nations, minorities and regions have since the end of the Second World War been demanding autonomy and, in some cases, independence within Europe. The two processes – the striving for a European unification and the promotion of an own identity – would at first appear to be diametrically opposed, but they are by no means mutually exclusive: “*The creation of a European identity will not erase national or regional identities. Rather, it will generate concentric circles of identity, each of them invoked at different times.*”¹⁰ Both processes have become more and more intertwined with each other during the second half of the twentieth century. With regard to this, Peter Lynch wrote: “*Autonomy and European integration have (...) become intertwined, and this process has occurred over the long term and looks set to continue.*”¹¹ Generally, two stages are seen in the post-war revival of regionalism in Europe. An initial wave was seen during the years from 1960 to 1970, and a second wave, the so-called ‘new regionalism’, was seen during the years from 1980 to 1990. During the first wave, regionalists and nationalists particularly supported the retention of their own language, culture and identity. More recently, there have also been economic arguments such as the need for fiscal autonomy. It is typical that the number of votes for regionalist and nationalist parties in Western Europe has increased since the eighties. This revival has certainly been noticeable since 1989 and the collapse of the USSR. “*The question of nationality has become much more important. Obviously, the reason for this is the political upheaval which has taken place in the Soviet Union and the dramatic situation in Croatia,*” was what Jaak Vandemeulebroucke, who was then a Euro MP for the EFA, wrote in an opinion document in September 1991.¹² A *Eurobarometer* survey conducted in that year showed that most Europeans felt an affinity for their region which was often much greater than that which they felt for Europe. However, the two affinities did not conflict with each other.¹³ Particularly in regions and for stateless nations in which the level of regional/national identity was strongest (for example Flanders, the Basque territory, Brittany, Catalonia and Scotland), more autonomy was demanded, so that they could play their own role – and this included Europe. After the Second World War, it seemed to some that the traditional nation state was finished. Thus, the Japanese author Kenichi Ohmae announced the end of the nation state as a centre of economic development: “*the nation state has become an unnatural, even dysfunctional, unit for organizing human activity and managing economic endeavor in a borderless world. It represents no genuine, shared community of economic interests; it defines no meaningful flows of economic activity. In fact, it overlooks the true linkages and synergies that exist among often disparate populations by combining important measures of human activity at the wrong level of analysis.*”¹⁴ Even at a political level, the role of the nation state as a primary entity was thought to be over. More was heard about a ‘Europe of the Regions’, a bipolar organisation with the regions on the one hand and a supranational Europe on the other. However, the nation state continued to have the role of a protagonist: “*We have not seen the rise of a new territorial hierarchy. The national state has not been bypassed in favour of a Europe of the regions. The national state remains the primary actor in the EU.*”¹⁵

The idea of a ‘Europe of the Regions’ was at odds with the practice of a Europe based on the nation states. Perhaps, it was not so much a matter of a “*Europe of the Regions*” as a “*Europe with the Regions*”.¹⁶

Until 1979, the European Parliament was at any rate composed of delegations from the member state parliaments.¹⁷ Consequently, stateless nations, regions and minorities found

it difficult to make themselves heard in the European institutions. It is very significant that it was only in 1975 that nationalists had seats in the European Parliament: Scotland's Winifred (Winnie) Ewing and some Irish MEPs who belonged to Fianna Fail.¹⁸ It is within this context that the initiatives which originated from the regionalists and nationalists themselves can be seen. This is how there came to be the Congress of European Communities and Regions (Paris, April 9-10, 1949) which was organised by Breton nationalists. The Congress pleaded for European institutions which had regional representation. In the autumn of 1949, an organisation which was later known as the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) was consequently established. The FUEN wanted to be an umbrella organisation for European minority languages and was devoted to the maintenance of cultural diversity. A second initiative followed in 1973, when some regionalist parties formed the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations. This lobbying body did not have much of an impact on the rights and interests of the regionalist parties, but it resulted in some regionalist parties coming together.¹⁹ There is no doubt that these initiatives contributed to the formation of ideas and opinions about a Europe of the Regions.

In 1981, a number of regionalist and nationalist parties combined to form a union based on co-operation: the European Free Alliance (EFA). This was the first and only lasting transnational association of regionalist and democratic nationalist parties in Europe. We will run through its history below. As the formation of the EFA occurred at virtually the same time as the first direct elections to the European Parliament in June 1979, we shall discuss the twenty-five year history of this organisation in the context of the various legislative periods.

In 1979, the year of the first direct elections of the European Parliament, Paul Romus concluded his publication about the European regions as follows: “*Pour la première fois dans leur histoire, les peuples européens vont élire leurs représentants à un Parlement unique. Qui vont-ils élire, abstraction faite bien entendu de leur appartenance politique? Mais, bien sûr, des représentants de leurs régions, même si dans certains Etats, des listes pouvaient être nationales. De sorte que, par la force des choses, le Parlement européen sera régional. (...) Dès lors, on peut penser que, grâce au Parlement européen, une relance se dessinera de la politique régionale européenne. En refermant cet ouvrage sur L'Europe et les régions, pensez-y: un jour nous écrivons, ensemble, un autre livre, L'Europe des régions.*”²⁰ Was the future outlined by Romus too optimistic?

NOTES

5 http://europa.eu.int/abc/symbols/9-may/decl_en.htm.

6 On the history of European unification, see: A. Blair, **The European Union since 1945**, Harlow, 2005.

7 **Official Journal of the European Union**, December 16, 2004, no. 310, p. 1.

8 J. Richardson (ed.), **European Union. Power and policy-making**, Abingdon, 2006 (3), p. 52.

9 A chronological outline of European integration can be found in: A. Blair, **The European Union [...]**; W.F.V. Vanthoor, **A Chronological History of the European Union 1946-2001**, Cheltenham, 2002; F. Delmartino, **Profiel van de Europese Unie. Een inleidend handboek**, Leuven, 2001.

- 10 M. Guibernau, **Nationalisms. The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century**, Cambridge, 1996, p. 114.
- 11 P. Lynch, **Minority Nationalism and European Integration**, Cardiff, 1996, p. 197.
- 12 J. Vandemeulebroucke, Federalisme meer dan ooit, in: **De Standaard**, September 21, 1991.
- 13 **"No Europe without it's Regions"**, Eurobarometer, 1992, http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/ebs_063_en.pdf.
- 14 K. Ohmae, The rise of the region state, in: **Foreign Affairs**, Spring 1993, p. 78.
- 15 M. Keating & L. Hooghe, **Bypassing the nation-state? Regions and the EU policy process**, in: J. RICHARDSON (ed.), **European Union [...]**, p. 283.
- 16 S. Borrás-Alomar, T. Christiansen & A. Rodríguez-Pose, Towards a 'Europe of the Regions'? Visions and Reality from a Critical Perspective, in: **Regional Politics and Policy**, vol. 4, 1994, no. 2, p. 26.
- 17 A short history of the European Parliament and an outline of its functioning can be found in: R. Corbett, F. Jacobs & M. Shackleton, **The European Parliament** (sixth edition), London, 2005.
- 18 Werkingsverslag juli 1989-oktober 1990, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 8, no. 4, December 1990-February 1991, p. 4; <http://www.europarl.eu.int>.
- 19 P. Lynch, **Minority Nationalism [...]**, pp. 136-138.
- 20 "For the first time in the history of the European peoples, they are going to elect their representatives to a unique Parliament. Who will they elect, if you set aside the obvious question of their political partisanship? The answer is clear: people who will represent their regions, even if in some states the lists are drawn up on a national level. So the European Parliament will inevitably be regional. [...] Taken from there, one may conclude that, thanks to the European Parliament, a renewal of European regional politics is emerging on the horizon. When you close this book on the subject of **Europe and the Regions**, think about it: one day, we will write another book together, the story of a **Europe of the Regions**", P. Romus, **L'Europe et les régions**, Brussels, 1979, pp. 216-217.

EFA in the first legislative period (1979-1984)

In June 1979, following the first direct European elections, eight regionalist and nationalist parties signed the **Charter of Cooperation for the Construction of a Europe of the Nations** in Brussels (see Annex 1). The parties were: Volksunie (VU, Flanders), Partei der deutschsprachigen Belgier (PDB, the German Community in Belgium), Fryske Nasjonale Partij (FNP, Friesland), Union Valdôtaine (UV, Aosta valley), Plaid Cymru (Wales), Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya (CDC, Catalonia), Elsass-Lothringischer Volksbund (ELV, Alsace) and Unione di Populu Corsu (UPC, Corsica).¹ The preamble to this document – also referred to as the “**Charter of Brussels**” – read as follows: “*Every nation in the world has the right to self-government, the right to preserve and develop its own identity and cultural heritage. Every nation must be able to decide on its own system of government.*”² The signatories also gave their vision of a different Europe: “*Instead of a monolithic and centrally-governed Europe we propose a Europe of the peoples, in which all peoples are equal and work together freely.*” Even peoples that don’t (can’t) have their own state, had to be able to develop their cultural identity, according to the Charter.

The basis for this common programme was quite clearly the VU’s European programme.³ The party after all went to the elections ‘in the framework of a free alliance of European natinoalists and federalists and of political representatives of European peoples and minorities.’⁴ The VU too, advocated an alternative to a centralist Europe: the party wanted a federal Europe in which the nation state ceded powers upwards (Europe) and downwards (the regions and Communities), so that policy was pursued at the level deemed most appropriate (what the regions can do, should not be done at a higher level). To make the regions’ voice resonate in the European Parliament, the VU wanted a Senate of the Regions. That they were well ahead of their time is borne out by the attention paid to peace, ecology, sustainable energy, etc. In addition to the federalist programme there was therefore also room for the social aspect.⁵ Similarly, the party paid attention to ecological issues, at a time when none of the Green parties existed.

To the VU nationalism (here: Flemish-nationalism) and Europe were not mutually exclusive. Nelly Maes, the acting chairwoman of the EFA remembers how her political mentor Maurits Coppieters convinced people “*that you could be both Flemish and European at the same time, and that autonomy for Flanders combined with European unity would bring about ‘less’ Belgium.*”⁶ That this was an ‘and-and situation’ was self-evident to Coppieters: “*Hoe zouden wij nationalist kunnen zijn, zonder er aan te denken dat het is om Europa*

Neil T. BLANEY
(County Donegal,
1922 – 1995)



Neil T. Blaney was born in Rossnakill, Ireland. He was the father of seven children. In a by-election held in 1948, he was elected to represent Fianna Fáil, and he succeeded his deceased father Neal Blaney Sr., who had been one of the co-founders of the party in 1926. In 1957, Blaney was the Minister for Postal Communications and Telegraphs, and he later became the Minister for Local Government (1957-1966). When he stood for the party leadership in 1966, he stepped down in favour of Jack Lynch, who won the election. Blaney became the Minister for Agriculture (1966-1970). In May 1970, Blaney was expelled from the government on suspicion of supplying weapons to the IRA, a charge which was dropped later that year. Blaney founded his own party, Independent Fianna Fáil. He always said: **“We didn’t leave Fianna Fáil; Fianna Fáil left us.”** There would never be a reunion of the two parties. Blaney died on November 8, 1995. Neil Blaney, who wanted to see the reunification of the Irish Republic, was very familiar with the Irish conflict, as he had to drive through Six Counties to arrive at the Dáil in Dublin. He had to go through the obligatory checkpoints every time. In addition to his political activities in Ireland, Blaney was also twice elected as a Member of the European Parliament (1979-1984 and 1989-1994), choosing to belong to a group with EFA MEPs each time. He was the treasurer of the Rainbow Group. In the year before his death, Blaney did not stand as a candidate for the European elections. Despite his illness, he kept his seat in the Dáil until his death.

te vormen?”, he quoted (How could we be nationalists, without thinking of it as creating Europe?).⁷

Cooperation in the European Parliament: the technical coordination group

The European elections of June 1979 confirmed the Socialists, the Christian-democrats and the Communists as the largest groups in the European Parliament and apart from the Liberal group and the group with the gaullists, there were a number of members who chose not to join any group, resulting in an extremely weak position in an Assembly of 410 members. John Lambert, the British journalist and graduate of the College of Europe therefore took the initiative after the elections to create the **Group for Technical Coordination and Defence of Independent Groupings and Members (TCDI)** in the European Parliament. Lambert thought it unfair that newly elected members who could not or did not want to join the large groups – where they would remain on the fringes – did not even have offices, meeting rooms, etc. Lambert thus brought together eleven ideologically different members of Parliament, who didn’t want to sit as ‘non-aligned’ members either, into the TCDI.⁸ He became secretary-general of this heterogeneous group made up of four Euro-critical Danes of the Folkebevægelsen mod EF, three Italians of the Partito Radicale, two Italians from Democrazia Proletaria and Partito Democratico di Unità Proletaria respectively, the former Irish minister Neil T. Blaney who was sitting as an independent and Maurits Coppieters (VU).⁹ The

French speaking Belgians Antoinette Spaak of Front Démocratique des Francophones (FDF) and Paul-Henri Gendebien of Rassemblement Wallon (RW) joined only briefly, after which they sat as independent members.¹⁰ Basically, the TCDI was a motley crew, which once made Nelly Maes ask Lambert pointedly what had brought him to coordinate *“these people who could not be coordinated?”*¹¹

The TCDI was more of a cooperative association than a truly cohesive group, which tried to ensure inter alia the right to have speaking time in Parliament, meeting rooms and

interpreters for its members. Apart from this TCDI members acted completely independently. This collective influence of the TCDI became abundantly clear when members of the Partito Radicale and the Democrazia Proletaria tabled more than five thousand amendments to the Nord report which tried to abolish the TCDI as a group. The European Parliament was paralysed by this filibustering and gave in.¹² This triumph was not without its importance: “*Juist deze ‘technische faciliteiten’ maakten het ons mogelijk de dialoog aan te knopen met de regionalistische partijen, met hen studiedagen te organiseren, ze te bundelen in de Europese Vrije Alliantie en er ook het permanent secretariaat voor te verzorgen.*”¹³ The TCDI was a temporary, pragmatic solution. It was ‘a bridge, a springboard to a regionalist group’, as Vandemeulebroucke put it.¹⁴ In 1981, Coppieters wanted to see the group broadened to include the autonomists who had found a home in other groups.¹⁵ The Alsatian Ferdinand Moschenross (ELV) pleaded in favour of closer ties to the Greens.¹⁶ During the second mandate of the European Parliament we will see how prophetic this proposal was to be.

The large groups reacted bitterly to the new ‘group’. Coppieters remembered that the creation of a small, ‘verry revolutionary’ group was seen by the large groups as a direct declaration of war: “*the numerous incidents on rules and regulations soon turned us into public enemy number one.*”¹⁷ This became clear when he stuck up for Edmond Simeoni (the brother of Max Simeoni), the chairman of the UPC, who was not given a room for a press conference on the situation in Corsica. At which point Coppieters improvised a press conference in his own office. Or when in 1980 he wrote an open letter to the French president Valéry Giscard d’Estaing in which he stated: “*Met de erkenning van de Corsicaanse eigenheid zou de Franse Republiek een nieuwe unieke dimensie geven aan de 200-jaar oude leuze “vrijheid, gelijkheid, broederlijkheid”*”¹⁸ The French members of Parliament were seething because they considered the Corsican question to be an internal affair and saw Cop-



Maurits COPPIETERS
(Sint-Niklaas 1920 – 2005)

The Fleming Maurits Coppieters studied history and later became a Doctor of Laws and obtained a master's degree in East European studies. During the Second World War, he refused to work for

the German occupiers and went underground. After many years as a teacher, he worked as a lawyer for a while. He was one of the people who re-established the **Vlaamse Volksbeweging** (Flemish People's Movement), of which he was the President from 1957-1963.

Coppieters' political career began when he became a member of the Volksunie (VU) which was formed in 1954. With the exception of two years, Coppieters was a member of the Town Council during the period between 1964 and 1983. He was also elected as a member of the Chamber (1965-1971) and as a member of the Senate (1971-1979). At the same time, Coppieters was the President of the VU in the newly formed **Cultuurraad voor de Nederlandstalige Cultuurgemeenschap** (Cultural Council for the Dutch-speaking Community) (later the Flemish Parliament), of which he became the President when the VU formed part of the government. In 1979, Coppieters was elected during the first direct elections of the European Parliament. As a regionalist, he became a member of the Technical Group of Independent Members. Among other things, he made a name for himself when he championed the cause of the Corsicans. In the meantime, Coppieters also played a pioneering role in the formation of the European Free Alliance, of which he became the Honorary President and in whose expansion he continued to play a role, even after he said farewell to active politics in 1981. In that year, Jaak Vandemeulebroucke succeeded him in the European Parliament. In 1996, Coppieters joined forces with De Batselier to promote “Het Sienjaar”, a text which was written with a view to achieving political revival beyond the party boundaries. Coppieters died on November 11 2005. Among other things, Coppieters was the author of: **Het jaar van de Klaproos; Ik was een Europees Parlementslied; De Schone en het Beest** (The Year of the Poppy; I was a Member of the European Parliament; Beauty and the Beast). Honorary member of the EFA.



“Strasbourg: first abuse. Twenty-one MEPs wanted to put Corsica up for discussion”. That is what the French newspaper *Le Figaro* wrote in 1980 after Maurits Coppieters and others wanted to discuss about Corsica in the European Parliament.

pieters’ intervention as interference. The French newspaper *Le Figaro* headlined on January 18, 1980: “*Strasbourg: premier abus. Vingt et un députés européens voulaient discuter de la Corse*”. This first incident set the tone.¹⁹

Towards an Alliance of European regionalists

Shortly after the elections, at the International Congress of the UPC (August 17-19, 1979) the **Declaration of Bastia** (see Annex 2) was signed by the eight co-signatories of the Charter of Brussels plus the Basque nationalist party *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (PNV). The Declaration

reaffirmed the Charter, which was to lead to a “Declaration of the Rights of Peoples”. To this end, a permanent secretariat was to be set up in Brussels for coordination and consul-



Roelof FALKENA
(Snits, 1936)

The Frisian veterinary surgeon Roelof Falkena was a co-founder of the European Free Alliance. He had been a member of the Frisian movement during his student years. He was already a mem-

ber of the FNP when the party took part in elections for the first time. Falkena was the member of the FNP who was responsible for contact with the EFA. Although he was never elected as a Member of the European Parliament, which would not have been possible as the Netherlands have a national electoral system, he knew how to use the tool of the EFA to channel Frisian interests at a European level. Falkena was a definite asset at general and committee

meetings from the start. He was a member of the Committee of the EFA from 1981. Falkena was also active at a local level and particularly in the Opsterlân branch, a branch which he helped to establish. Between 1988 and 1999, Falkena was a member of the Provinciale Staten of Friesland (Provincial Assembly). He was also an advocate of participation in national elections: “**Wy moatte sels immen yn Den Haach ha dy’t foar de Fryske belangen opkomt**” (We need someone in The Hague who will defend the Frisian cause). This dream became a reality in 2003, when Mr Ten Hoeve for FNP was elected as a member of the **Onafhankelijke senaatsfractie** (Independent Senate Group). In 2004, Falkena announced to the Bureau that he was leaving in order to make way for a younger generation of the FNP (Bureau, September 9, 2004). He was a member of the Town Council of Opsterlân between 1999 and 2005.

tation between those parties and movements that subscribed to the idea of a Europe of Peoples. Secondly, they denounced the violation of human rights of peoples who stood up for the recognition of their national identity. Thirdly, the autonomy of the Basque country, Catalonia and (shortly afterwards) Galicia were an incentive to continue the fight for a Europe of Peoples and for international solidarity.²⁰

From the 8th to the 10th of January 1981 the study days “Stateless Peoples, Regionalism, Autonomy and Self Government in Europe” took place in Brussels. This is where the previous agreements of Brussels and Bastia were subsumed under the heading of “European Free Alliance” – for the time being nothing more than an amalgam of parties and movements that shared the principle of a Europe of the Peoples. There were no statutes yet and each signatory party was guaranteed independence of operation and action.²¹

The Brussels Convention sought to implement the agreements. The previous texts were fleshed out further in a “Declaration of the Brussels Convention”. This contained six parts: the democratic-humanist, federal, cultural, social, economic and international position of the EFA.²² The permanent secretariat also started taking shape. The secretariat aimed to “bring about permanent consultation and concrete cooperation between movements and parties that subscribe to the concept of a Europe of Peoples” and was led by a steering group made up of a representative and an alternate from each of the signatory parties.²³ To reduce costs they drew on people already working within the European Parliament.²⁴

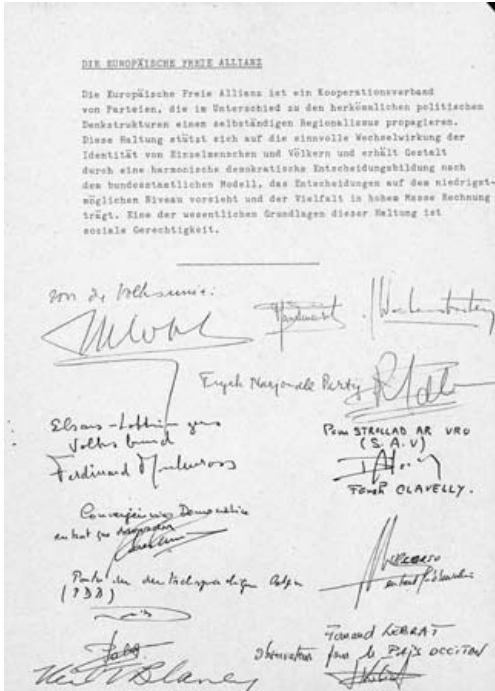
The creation of the European Free alliance: “unity in diversity”

Six months after the Brussels Convention, the European Free Alliance was officially instituted in Strasbourg, with the signing of the **Declaration of the Brussels Convention** (July 9, 1981, see Annex 3).²⁵ The Declaration started as follows: “*The European Free Alliance is a cooperative association of political parties which, in contrast with established traditional patterns of political thought, advocate a form of integrated regionalism. This concept is based on meaningful interplay between the individual and national identity and is give(n) structural form in a harmonious, democratic decision-making process on federal lines whereby decisions are taken at the lowest possible level and the greatest importance is attached to individuality.*”



Yann FOUÉRE
(Aignan, 1910)

Yann Fouéré is a Doctor of Laws and has a B.Litt and a Diploma in Political Science. In the course of his career, he has been the General Secretary of the Consultative Committee of Brittany, a journalist and a business manager. As a Breton and European militant, he has held high positions in administration and political journalism. Yann is more concerned with action than theory, and the varied nature of his experience makes him one of the most original and fearless thinkers of his generation. His influence far exceeds the boundaries of his country of origin as a result of his contact with and his battle on behalf of all national minorities and stateless nations in Europe. Yann Fouéré founded *Ar brezhonec er skol* (Union pour l’enseignement du breton), an association which is responsible for the teaching of Breton. He was present at the first meetings of the EFA in his capacity as a representative of the **Parti pour l’Organisation de la Bretagne Libre** (P.O.B.L.).



On July 9, 1981, nine partners signed the Declaration of the Brussels Convention in Straatsburg. This was the official founding of the European Free Alliance. The signers were: Volksunie (Flanders), Partei der deutschsprachigen Belgier (German speaking Community in Belgium), Fryske Nasjonale Partij (Friesland), Strollad ad Vro (Brittany), Elsass-Lothringischer Volksbund (Alsace), Unione di Populu Corsu (Corsica), Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya (Catalonia), mr. Neil T. Blaney (Ireland) and mr. Fernad Lebrat (Occitania).

*Social justice is one of its fundamental principles.*²⁶ Representatives of nine parties from five countries signed the Declaration and were therefore the founders of the EFA: the VU, PDB, FNP, Strollad ad Vro (SAV, Brittany), ELV, UPC, CDC, the Irish former minister Neil T. Blaney (who in 1971 was one of the founding fathers of Independent Fianna Fail)²⁷ and the Occitan Fernand Lebrat²⁸. UPC made it known they only wanted to take part as observers.²⁹ Only in 1984 would the Corsican party become a full member.³⁰ Lebrat and the CDC too were ‘only’ present in Strasbourg as observers.

Plaid Cymru did not join initially because the content of the EFA was too unclear to them. Nonetheless the party was present at the study days. With the PNV– which did not



Herri GOURMELEN
(Argol, 1942)

The Breton Herri Gourmelen comes from **“une famille bretonnante du milieu populaire”**, as he himself puts it. He was attracted to Breton at a young age. As a result, he completed

periods of language training and became a militant campaigner for the protection of Breton identity. He also studied German and Celtic at the University of Rennes, and taught German and Breton for 37 years. Herri Gourmelen was the inspiration behind a group of students and was elected (1961-1965) as the Chairman of **Jeunesse Etudiante Bretonne**, an association of young people studying Breton. In this capacity,

he was a member of CELIB (**Comité d'Etudes et de Liaison des Intérêts Bretons**) which was formed in 1951 with a view to reviving the Breton economy. The Union Démocratique Bretonne (UDB) was formed in 1964, and Herri Gourmelen was already a member by January 1965. He was responsible for the branch and then the federation; he became the person responsible for external affairs and the spokesperson for the Party in 1980. He would continue to act as such until 1994. He has since been responsible for the elected members. He has been a member of the Town Council of Saint Malo since 1983 and chairs the AEMB (**Association des Elus Bretons**); this is an association for mandatories of the UDB and the alternative Left in Brittany. Gourmelen was also the person who conducted negotiations from 1984 with a view to making it possible for the UDB to join the EFA, something which took place in 1987 from 1984.

join even though it had signed the Declaration of Bastia³¹ – contacts were pursued further as well.³² According to Herman Verheirstraeten there was a degree of disappointment over this ‘absence of the Welshmen and the Basques, and reluctance of the Catalans’.³³ Negotiations about membership were also ongoing with Sydslesvigsk Vælgerforening (SSW, South Slesvig Association of Voters) and various parties from France, Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.³⁴

Coppieters pointed to the long and difficult road that had been travelled to bring together the various European regionalists and nationalists.³⁵ This was of course no mean feat. Even the terminology reveals the diversity of the parties: was one regionalist, autonomist, nationalist or (con)federalist? The parties also differed in terms of their place in the political spectrum, their electoral success, history and programme. Plaid Cymru, for example, was at that time very sceptical of the EC.³⁶ But even amongst themselves there was a certain degree of distrust: Plaid Cymru worried about certain references in the press stating that some VU members had been collaborators during the Second World War, and the Occitanes inextricably linked the Corsicans to terrorism etc. For the time being the EFA was *a* European Free Alliance, not *the* European Free Alliance: not all the regionalist and nationalist members of the European Parliament found shelter under the EFA-umbrella, many were “*scattered across other groups.*”³⁷ The parliamentarian from the Scottish National Party (SNP), Winifred – Winnie – Ewing, who was a ‘non-aligned’ member of the European Parliament since 1975³⁸, for example, joined the gaullist Group of European Democrats for Progress. The choice made by “*Madame Ecosse*” – as she was nicknamed in the European Parliament – was in part inspired by a desire to join the largest possible “*ennemies*” of British Unionism: i.e. the Irish of Fianna Fail and the French.³⁹ A missed opportunity according to Coppieters: “*At one time she had enjoyed a reputation as the lone voice of the autonomists, but she was now under a seal of silence from her political group.*”⁴⁰ Joachim Dallsass of Südtiroler Volkspartei (SVP) instead found refuge with the Christian Democrats (EPP). Vandemeulebroucke put this scattered order down to the fact that in 1979 there was little contact among the European nationalist and regionalist parties.⁴¹ But that they existed was a fact.



John LAMBERT
(1936)

The Briton John Lambert studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford University and was a student at the College of Europe (Bruges). He worked as a journalist for Agence Europe

(Luxemburg, 1959-1963), was a spokesperson for the European Commission (Brussel, 1963-1967) and was the European Correspondent in Brussels for the **Sunday Times** and **The Economist** (1968-1979).

John was a founding member of Agenor in 1967. A progressive European left-wing think tank, Agenor worked to strengthen left-wing and Green representation at a European level through the development of alternative networks and ideas. John helped to create the World Information Service of Energy (W.I.S.E.) in 1978. He was also involved with the creation of the European Nuclear Disarmament (END) Convention. From 1985, the Agenor Group initiated the ‘DIALOGUE for European Alternatives’, bringing together left-wing and regionalist activists.

John was instrumental in the conception and creation of the Technical Group of Independent Members and was invited to become its Secretary General. Following the second European Parliament elections, John continued as the Secretary-General of the new Rainbow Group, a confederation of the Green Alternative European Link (GRAEL), the Danish People’s Movement Against the EC and the regionalist European Free Alliance. John left the European Parliament following the elections of 1989.

LEBRAT, Fernand

Fernand Lebrat was a (cultural) militant from Occitania in the seventies. At the time of the formation of the EFA, he was the Chairman of **Vivarés tèrra occitana**, a quarterly cultural journal in Occitan which was particularly circulated in the Ardèche (Occitan part of the Rhône-Alps Region). Lebrat attended the study days which were held in Brussels in January 1981 and co-signed the Declaration of the Convention of Brussels. In this, he represented Occitania, where he tried to form a party and where he also tried to bring Occitan out of its isolation by organising a conference on minority languages, etc. Lebrat was a rapporteur for the EFA.



What preceded the creation of the EFA

Even before 1979 there were contacts between autonomist and regionalist minded people, associations and organisations but they did not lead to structured cooperation of these political parties at the European level.⁴² “(...) *il n’y avait pas de cadre dans lequel pouvaient opérer les forces politiques nationalistes/autonomistes/régionalistes. Et cela nous semblait indispensable pour la survie du courant régional en Europe.*”⁴³ In the 60’s and 70’s members from the VU established contacts with various regionalist and nationalist parties in Europe. During that period Willy Kuijpers tried to draw attention to the problems of minorities.⁴⁴ He often worked together with his party colleague Walter Luyten. They often took action in the Basque country, but

also in Armenia, Kurdistan, Brittany, Catalonia etc.⁴⁵ Slowly but surely the intention arose to set up far-reaching cooperation in order to realise a common goal: a Europe for the Peoples. “(...) *j’aimerais une sorte de coalition et alliance des partis déjà structurés au lieu des mouvements qui se disent porteparoles ‘des peuples et des régions’ qui n’ont pas d’impact concret. C’est pour ça qu(e) j’ai pris l’initiative de réunir des partis bien structurés, déjà apparentés (sic) et dont on sait qu’ils sont intéressés à une coalition qui a une chance d’être plus qu’une action sur papier,*” wrote Maurits Coppieters in December 1980 to Rudolf Pankert (PDB).⁴⁶ The signing of the Charter of Brussels was a first important step towards the creation of this alliance.

The Brussels Convention also convened a Bureau – a day to day administration so to speak – that met twice monthly, and for the first time on September 21, 1981 in Brussels.⁴⁷ Jaak Vandemeulebroucke was elected as chairman, Maurits Coppieters as honorary chairman and Herman Verheirstraeten became secretary.⁴⁸ This also confirms the leading role of the VU. At the outset, the Flemish party therefore became the driving force for the further development of the EFA. Symptomatic of this was the information paper *Euro-nieuws*, the official journal of the EFA, which however placed a lot of emphasis on the VU. Verheirstraeten said the party became “*the cement*” for the European nationalists in the European Parliament.⁴⁹ This also made sense, given Brussels’ central position in Europe and the multilingualism of ‘the Flemish’. “*It was just a practical solution, nothing more,*” professed the VU.⁵⁰

For a different Europe

The EFA envisaged a Europe that was more than just a free market, namely a federal Europe in which the voice of the peoples and regions was heard. A social Europe where the

economy served the people and not the other way round. To achieve these ideals the (often comparatively small) regionalist and nationalist parties had to be heard in the European Parliament. This is why they forged an alliance, so that also the regionalist and nationalist parties without representation in the European Parliament had a chance to take part in the European political landscape. The EFA supported local action by these parties morally and materially, by attending their congresses for example or by giving support to election campaigns.⁵¹

The EFA was not opposed to Europe. On the contrary, it was quite positively disposed to Europe. But it had to be a different Europe. The EFA fought more than once for a uniform electoral law for European elections which would also be more advantageous for smaller parties, since the election procedure in force, with its high guarantees or electoral thresholds and/or large state wide constituencies, made the inclusion of smaller parties (such as regionalists) more difficult.⁵² This is why the Seitlinger report, which tried to set out a uniform election procedure and which was adopted in 1982, was followed with particular interest.⁵³ Because a great number of unfavourable conditions continued to exist, Vandemeulebroucke submitted his own draft resolution.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the EFA wanted a bicameral European Parliament where the Lower Chamber would be elected directly by the European citizens using a uniform electoral system, and where the Upper Chamber would offer the regions sufficient latitude to influence European policy. Europe needed to be constructed from the communities and regions – *“the natural community in which the individual can fulfill himself”* – instead of being imposed by the Member States. This is why peoples and regions needed to be given autonomy. Small minorities that could not form a state, needed to be expressly recognised. And this was not limited to Europe: *“EFA declares its solidarity with all peoples of Europe and the world, in particular those who suffer under foreign and dictatorial domination and those who are on the road towards full development. The EFA is therefore in favour of proper recognition of the fundamental rights of individuals and nations.”*⁵⁵

Government had to be as close to the people as possible. What the region could do for itself, should not be dealt with at a higher level. Education, for example, should clearly belong to the regions and communities.⁵⁶ When in October 1981 the resolution of the



**Ferdinand
MOSCHENROSS**
(Hagenau, 1929)

Ferdinand Moschenross was a librarian from Strasbourg who co-founded the **Front autonomiste de libération** in 1975, for which he was a candidate in the cantonal

elections of March 1976 with the campaign slogan **“il faut libérer l’Alsace”** (Alsace must be liberated) and with which he then secured 11 percent of the votes. Ferdinand Moschenross was the President of the **Elsass-Lothringischer Volksbund** (ELV) (Alsace-Lorraine People’s Union). He attended the meeting in Brussels in January 1981 on behalf of the region of Alsace-Lorraine and was in this way a co-founder of the EFA. In 1986, he opened a House of European Regions in Strasbourg, the heart of Alsace-Lorraine. The **“Europahaus der Länder”** (House of the European Regions) is a place where nationalists can meet each other. Moschenross is the President. Among other things, Moschenross is well known for the petitions which he himself collected on behalf of the language of Alsace.

Later, it was particularly the Union du Peuple Alsacien (UPA/EVU) (Union of the Alsatian People) which represented the EFA in Alsace.

Ferdinand Moschenross laid the foundation for the surviving intergroup in the European Parliament which is concerned with minorities and which is now officially called the “Intergroup for Traditional National Minorities, Constitutional Regions and Regional Languages”.

Rudi PANKERT
(Eupen, 1929)

Dr Rudolf Pankert is a retired surgeon and the younger brother of the late Rainer Pankert, who was the Mayor of the town of Eupen (German-speaking Belgium) for a long time. Dr Pankert was one of the first people to openly champion the cause of the autonomy of the German-speaking minority in Belgium. He relied on the ideas of his brother to convene a meeting in Eupen with the mayors from the German-speaking region (25 mayors) for the first time.



It was the start of the movement for the equal treatment of German speakers in Belgium. From this there emerged in 1971 the *Partei der deutschsprachigen Belgier* (PDB) (Party of German-speaking Belgians), of which Dr Rudolf Pankert was one of the founders and has since been one of the figureheads and critical advisers of the PDB.

He was also the one who forged close relations with the *Volksunie* (VU) and who also maintained them until the VU split up. From the start, he was also a defender of the PDB joining the EFA, an operation in which he had himself participated. Dr Pankert was a member of the **Rat der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft** (RDG) (Council of the German-speaking Community in Belgium), as well as of the Town Council of Eupen.

Italian socialist Gaetano Arfé – which provided measures to support regional and minority languages and to promote them in education, the mass media, public life and social affairs – was before the European Parliament, Vandemeulebroucke took the floor on behalf of the EFA and at the same time introduced ‘his’ alliance to the Parliament.⁵⁷ The plans to reduce the number of official languages in the EC, were blocked in Parliament. The EFA as a supporter of multilingualism wanted to look into how the translation and interpretation service could be organised along more rational lines.⁵⁸

Apart from culture, language and autonomy, the EFA also had a social and economic dimension. This was reflected, for example, in a critical position vis à vis the arms industry, in particular the nuclear industry – a “*threat to the existence of mankind*”. There was also a Third World aspect to the EFA, as becomes clear from the Declaration on the Brussels Convention: “*The people of the Third World have to be helped in their struggle for independence and social justice. An equitable distribution of labour on global scale, as well as fair remuneration for labour and raw materials are seen as preconditions for the securing of world peace.*”⁵⁹

Towards the European Parliament elections of 1984: “now or never”

The EFA went to the elections with a number of essential points, drawn up by Phil Williams (Plaid Cymru).⁶⁰ This platform was a common *minimum minimorum*, in addition to which parties could highlight their own priorities:

1. a legal statute for all peoples;
2. respect for each language and tradition;
3. a more robust regional policy for a better distribution of welfare across Europe;
4. against nuclear armaments, in favour of a nuclear-free Europe;
5. Europe should open up to the Third World;
6. a uniform and democratic election procedure in Europe.

In November 1982 members of the FNP, Parti pour l’Organisation de la Bretagne Libre (POBL), Parti Alsacien (PAL), Volem Viure al País (VVAP, Occitania), Plaid Cym-

ru, Rassemblement Populaire Wallon (RPW), UPC, PDB and VU, signed the **Second Declaration of Bastia**, which served as an EFA platform for the 1984 elections.⁶¹ It was a confirmation of EFA's alternative political vision and contained a swipe at the electoral rules in force which were a thorn in the side of peoples and regions.⁶²

Some EFA members had experienced one legislature as an MEP – within or outside the TCDI. The EFA had also rallied an increasing group of regionalist and nationalist parties – on the eve of the elections the count stood at eighteen from seven countries.⁶³ During the next legislative period they wanted their own EFA group – a real group – in the European Parliament. This was the only way of safeguarding their own interests. But of course it all hinged on the outcome of the elections: *“Het sukses van onze huidige partners bij de Euroverkiezingen van 1984 zal in hoge mate bijdragen tot een versnelde uitbouw van een fractie van gelijkgezinde Europese regionalisten,”* wrote Vandemeulebroucke (who in 1981 succeeded Coppieters as member of Parliament when he stopped with active politics).⁶⁴ Already in 1982 Coppieters said: *“(…) our objective is to create an E.F.A. group in the European Parliament, and to go on from there to put the functioning of present-day Europe to the test.”*⁶⁵

In Italy at the end of 1983, under the impetus of Claude Magnabosco (UV) a cooperation association of five parties was founded.⁶⁶ In France there was great discord. In April 1983 it was established that the VU, RW, SNP and Plaid Cymru would take part in the elections, which by and large would yield few seats for the EFA.⁶⁷ With this in mind, chairman Vandemeulebroucke was realistic in assessing their chances of having their own group. After all they needed ten members from at least three different countries. It was to become a *“close call”*. Either there would again be a coordination group containing an EFA sub-group, or there would be an own group but then the Fiana Fail (with five seats) had to be willing to join.⁶⁸ In the run up to the elections more than one hint was dropped that maybe one should cooperate with the Greens.⁶⁹ Be this as it may, it was clear that the 1984 elections were of crucial importance. *“Where the European elections are concerned, it is now or never”*, according to Gustave Alirol (VVAP).⁷⁰

Conclusion 1979-1984

The EFA is founded. It did not yet form a strong united block, but it was an umbrella body in which parties retained their identity under the motto ‘unity in diversity’. During the first few years they searched for a number of common denominators that were enshrined in the Charter of Brussels (June 1979) and the Declaration of Bastia (August 1979). In these documents they set out their own vision of what Europe should look like: a federal Europe built on the regions, a social rather than an economic Europe, from



Philip WILLIAMS
(Tredegar, 1939 – 2003)

Phil Williams went on to pursue an academic career. He obtained his PhD. at Clare College, Cambridge, and – amongst other things – took up a post as professor in Physics at the University

of Wales. In addition, he became a political activist on behalf of Plaid Cymru, for which he served as national leader from 1970 to 1976. Standing for the first election for the Welsh Assembly in 1999, he was duly elected and won a seat. Philip Williams died in 2003.

being economic was also social in nature and based on solidarity; Europe as a bearer of peace. The right *modus operandi* was needed: the EFA secretariat was set up in Brussels, a Bureau was convened, study days were organised and meetings were held with (potential) members etc. But as Herman Verheirstraeten put it: the EFA in the beginning was an organisation with little more than a flag.⁷¹

The VU played an important role in these pioneering years. Not only did its location in Brussels – the centre of Europe – make it the ideal party to provide logistic support, but the party also had a lot of parliamentary experience in Belgium. This is why it is unsurprising that the VU acted as the engine of a European train which an increasing number of carriages – however little – were hooking on to.

There was no question of there being a real group in the European Parliament, let alone a party. An EFA group foundered in 1979 because there were not enough EFA MEP's. A technical coordination group was created, however, which fought for the “right to exist” of the different member parties.

After what might be called a preparatory period at the end of the 1970's, July 1980 meant the start of transnational cooperation amongst regionalist parties. This first period is therefore summarised succinctly in the words uttered by Maurits Coppieters on July 9, 1981 in Strasbourg: “*er beweegt wat*” (something is stirring).⁷²

NOTES

- 1 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10951(2/1): Programme of the study days “Peoples without a State: regionalism, autonomy and self-government in Europe” (Brussels, January 8-10, 1981): Brussels Charter – Declaration of Bastia and the Free European Alliance: A brief outline; J. Dedeurwaerder, **Coppieters, een voortrekker. Een levensbericht met getuigenissen van Paul van Remoortere, Herman Todts, John Lambert en Herman-Emiel Mertens en een gelegenheidsvers van Jo Gisekin**, Gent, 1985, p. 78.
- 2 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10951(2/1): Programme of the study days “Peoples without a State: regionalism, autonomy and self-government in Europe” (Brussels, January 8-10, 1981): Charter of cooperation for the construction of a Europe of the nations.
- 3 H. Verheirstraeten, De Europese Vrije Alliantie bestaat tien jaar, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 9, May 1991, no. 1, p. 2.
- 4 ADVN, DA215/20/D: Election programme Volksunie – Vrije Europese Alliantie, 1979, p. 2.
- 5 ADVN, DA215/20/D: Election programme Volksunie – Vrije Europese Alliantie, 1979, pp. 1, 3-14; ADVN, DA215/20/D: Electoral material Volksunie in occasion of the European elections of June 10, 1979.
- 6 G. Dauwen, “Interview with Nelly Maes, President of EFA Political Party”, December 10, 2004, <http://www.e-f-a.org>.
- 7 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10951(3/1): Minutes EFA meeting of July 9, 1981 in Strasbourg, p. 3.
- 8 ADVN, interview with Jaak Vandemeulebroucke by Mathieu Vanhaelewyn, Antwerp, October 27, 2005.
- 9 European Parliament, Bulletin 1980-1981; M. Coppieters, **Ik was een Europees Parlementslied**, Brussels, 1981, p. 5.
- 10 M. Coppieters, **Ik was [...]**, p. 5.
- 11 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10951(2/1): “Peoples without a state: regionalism autonomy and self-government in Europe”, Report on the study days held in Brussels, January 8-10, 1981, p. 7.
- 12 ADVN, interview with Jaak Vandemeulebroucke by Mathieu Vanhaelewyn, Antwerp, October 27, 2005; European Parliament, in: **Agenor**, no. 78 [thematic issue], June 1980, pp. 15-16.
- 13 “Precisely these ‘technical facilities’ made it possible for us to engage in a dialogue with the regionalist parties, to organise study days with them, to bring them together under the European Free Alliance and to run its permanent secretariat”, J. Vandemeulebroucke, **Europa, omzien naar morgen**, S.I., [1984], p. 10.

- 14 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10952(3/1): Minutes EFA meeting of December 9, 1983 in Brussels, p. 4.
- 15 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10951(2/1): “Peoples without a state: regionalism autonomy and self-government in Europe”, Report on the study days held in Brussels, January 8-10, 1981, pp. 8-9.
- 16 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10951(2/1): “Peoples without a state: regionalism autonomy and self-government in Europe”, Report on the study days held in Brussels January 8-10, 1981, p. 10.
- 17 M. Coppieters, **Ik was [...]**, p. 8.
- 18 “With the recognition of Corsican identity the French Republic would give a new unique dimension to the 200 year old motto “liberty, equality and fraternity”, Maurits Coppieters to Valery Guiscard d’Estaing, January 16, 1980, quoted in: J. Bosman, **De Europese Vrije Alliantie. Regionalisten in het Europees Parlement**, RUGent, Faculty Political and Social Sciences, unpublished dissertation, 1996, annex 10.
- 19 “Strasbourg: first abuse. Twenty-one European members of Parliament wanted to put Corsica up for discussion”, X. Marchetti, Strasbourg: premier abus., in: **Le Figaro**, January 18, 1980; ADVN, interview with Jaak Vandemeulebroucke by Mathieu Vanhaelewyn, Antwerp, October 27, 2005; Interview with Max Simeoni by Eva Mendoza, Antwerp, July 14, 2005; J. Dedeurwaerder, **Coppieters, een voortrekker. [...]**, p. 77.
- 20 After Franco’s regime – that had suppressed any form of regionalism – and the reinstatement of democracy, the constitution of December 29, 1978 made regionalisation possible in Spain: the country was divided into **‘comunidades autonomas’**. Thus the regions acquired the right to autonomy within the Spanish union. Since then the autonomous status was gradually granted to the different regions. The first among them were Catalonia (1979), the Basque Country (1979) and Galicia (1980), J. Subirats & R. Gallego, **Veinte Años de Autonomías en España**, Madrid, 2002, 451 p.
- 21 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10951(2/1): Programme for the study days “Peoples without a state: regionalism, autonomy and self-government in Europe” (Brussels, January 8-10, 1981): Brussels charter – Declaration of Bastia and the Free European Alliance, A brief outline.
- 22 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10951(2/1): Programme for the study days “Peoples without a state: regionalism, autonomy and self-government in Europe” (Brussels, January 8-10, 1981): working document 1 [own reference].
- 23 In this Bureau Roelof Falkena (FNP), Yann Fouéré (Strollad ad Vro), Ferdinand Moschenross (ELV), Fernand Lebrat (Pays Occitan), Robert Ramirez (CDC), Maurits Coppieters (VU), R. Henneges (PDB), and Neil T. Blaney sat as effective members. The representative of the UPC had not been appointed yet on July 9, 1981, ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10951(3/1): Minutes EFA meeting of July 9, 1981 in Strasbourg, p. 7.
- 24 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10951(2/1): Programme for the study days “Peoples without a state: regionalism, autonomy and self-government in Europe” (Brussels, January 8-10, 1981): working document 2 [own reference].
- 25 J. Vandemeulebroucke, **Europa, omzien naar morgen**, p. 29; **De regenboogfractie [...]**, p. 37, 43; **De Standaard**, July 15, 1981.
- 26 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10964(2/1): “Declaration of the Convention of Brussels”, p. 1.
- 27 Neil Blaney was excused at the meeting in Strasbourg, though signed the declaration later on, ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10951(3/1): Minutes EFA meeting of July 9, 1981 in Strasbourg, p. 1.
- 28 Lebrat added to his signature **“observateur pour le PAÏS OCCITAN”** (observer for Occitania). Lebrat was a representative for the Occitan periodical **Vivarés tèrra occitana**, ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10951(1/1): Attendance list Study days January 8-10, 1981 in Brussels.
- 29 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, D10968(4/1): Xavier Belgodere to Jaak Vandemeulebroucke, June 20, 1981.
- 30 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10968(3/1): Letter of Max Simeoni, September 9, 1988.
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- 42 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10952(1/1): Minutes TCDI meeting of November 11-12, 1982 in Bastia: introduction by Jaak Vandemeulebroucke.
- 43 "[...] there was no framework within which nationalist, autonomist or regionalist political forces could operate. And to us that seemed absolutely vital, in order for the regional movement in Europe to survive", ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10968(3/1): Letter to Max Simeoni, September 9, 1988.
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- 45 P. De Zaeger, Luyten, Walter, in: **Nieuwe Encyclopedie [...]**, pp. 1970-1971; W. KUIJPERS, Vlaanderen in Europa, in: **Wij in Europa: W.I.S. nieuwsbrief**, no. 1, November 1982, p. 1.
- 46 "[...] I would like a sort of coalition and alliance of parties that already have structures, rather than movements that purport to speak on behalf of 'the peoples and the regions' yet have no concrete impact. That's why I took the initiative to bring together parties that are already well structured – well 'allied' – and are known to be interested in a coalition that has a chance of being more than just an action on paper", ADVN, BE ADVN AC661, Rudolf Pankert Fonds: Maurits Coppiters to Rudolf Pankert, December 15, 1980.
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- 48 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10951(3/1): Minutes EFA meeting of July 9, 1981 in Strasbourg, p. 7.
- 49 H. Verheirstraeten, De Europese Vrije Alliantie bestaat [...], p. 3.
- 50 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10951(2/1): "Peoples without a state: regionalism autonomy and self-government in Europe". Report on the study days held in Brussels, January 8-10, 1981, p. 19.
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- 59 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10964(2/1): "Declaration of the Convention of Brussels": the social idea of the EFA.
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- 61 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10952(1/1): Agenda EFA meeting in Corsica.
- 62 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10952(1/1): Second Declaration of Bastia, November 11-12, 1982.
- 63 Plaid Cymru (Wales) and SNP from the United Kingdom; Independent Fianna Fail from Ireland; FNP from the Netherlands; RW, PDB and VU from Belgium; ELV-PAL, UPC, VVAP (Occitan), POBL and Parti Autonomiste Nord Catalan from France; CDC from Spain; UV, Partito Sardo d'Azione, Movimento Friuli and Movimento Autonomista Occitano (Italian Occitania) from Italy, J. Vandemeulebroucke, De Europese Vrije Alliantie (EVA), in: **WJ-Dossier Europa. Een bijlage van de Wij-Jongeren**, April 25, 1984, pp. 5-6.

The 25 year history of EFA – 1979-1984

- 64 “The success of our current partners in the 1984 elections will contribute significantly to the accelerated creation of a group of like minded European regionalists”, J. Vandemeulebroucke, De Europese Vrije Alliantie [...], p. 6.
- 65 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10956(4/1): Minutes TCDI meeting of November 11-12, 1982 in Bastia, p. 26.
- 66 These comprised: UV, Mouvement Autonomiste Occitan (Italian Occitan Party), PSA, Slovenska Skupnost (Italian Slovene Party) and Movimento Friuli (Friuli). There were also good contacts with smaller minorities such as Albanians, Greeks and Croats.
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- 68 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10952(3/1): Minutes EFA meeting of December 9, 1983 in Brussels, p. 4.
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- 70 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10956(4/1): Minutes TCDI meeting of November 11-12, 1982 in Bastia, p. 28.
- 71 H. Verheirstraeten, De Europese Vrije Alliantie bestaat [...], p. 3.
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EFA in the second legislative period (1984-1989)

The European elections of June 1984: a false start

After the elections it transpired that a nationalist group in Parliament was once again not on the cards.¹ Thus, three elected MEP's, whose parties were members of the EFA, took their seats in the twenty strong Rainbow group.² This again was a technical coordination group made up of four Danes of Folkebevægelsen, the GRAEL (Green-Alternative European Links) with twelve members, and three regionalists of the EFA. Jaak Vandemeulebroucke was re-elected and was joined by Willy Kuijpers from his own party and Michele Columbu of Partito Sardo d'Azione (PSd'A) from Sardinia. The Italians of Pannella were no longer present "*in the light of highly unfavourable past experience.*"³ The Euro-sceptics, ecologists and regionalists each formed a politically separate sub group within the Rainbow group. The largest sub group was formed by the Greens whose arrival in the European Assembly in 1984 did not go unnoticed (nor did the arrival of the extreme-right by the way).⁴ Up until now matters did not run that smoothly within this desired own group. The elected members of the regionalist parties (also EFA partners) were spread across the more traditional groups. Dalsass stayed with the EPP where according to Vandemeulebroucke he always voted with the Christian Democrats.⁵ According to the EFA president, "*negotiations with Fianna Fáil and the SNP had commenced. However, following lengthy deliberations, the latter decided against taking the necessary steps and in favour of staying with the Gaullists.*"⁶ There was a great deal of incomprehension surrounding the SNP's choice. Notwithstanding, the deputy chairman of the SNP, George Leslie, gave assurances that the SNP intended to have "*a close liaison with the European Free Alliance*" and wanted a common policy "*that will be of benefit both to the S.N.P. and the E.F.A.*"⁷ However, its only Member of Parliament, Winnie Ewing, once again chose the gaullist group which had offered her the chairmanship of the Committee on Youth and the vice-chairmanship of the group.⁸ Ewing's choice was dictated in part by her opposition to British Unionism (cf. supra). And of course the friendship with Fianna Fail played a role.⁹ Furthermore, the Scots had a different understanding of independence than the other members of the EFA. Finally, the SNP member Allan Macartney – together with Plaid Cymru – would play an important role in the SNP's accession to the EFA. Blaney, who in the previous legislature was sitting in the TCDI on behalf of the EFA, was not re-elected.¹⁰ The EFA tried to convince the other regionalist parties to join the Rainbow group, even though this did

Gustave ALIROL
(Le Puy-en-Velay, 1948)

In addition to his professional activities as a professor of Constitutional Law, Gustave Alirol has been the Mayor of Saint-Hostien (Haute Loire, Auvergne-Occitania) since 1983. Since 1978, he has been a member of the Committee of the Occitan movement **Volem Viure al País** (VVAP) (We want to live in our country), which has been a member of the European Free Alliance since 1982. Alirol played an important role in the emergence in 1987 of the **Partit Occitan** (an amalgam of VVAP and other Occitan political groupings), of which he has since been the President. He was also responsible for entering into negotiations with various parties in the run-up to the 1989 elections with a view to reaching the 5 percent threshold which applied in France. Alirol is the President of the **Fédération Régions & Peuples Solidaires (R&PS, Toulouse)** (Federation of United Regions & Peoples), the umbrella organisation of parties which are in favour of regional autonomy in France. He is the Vice-President of the EFA and a member of the Bureau.



not prove easy. Verheirstraeten detected there was a problem with the image, which stopped certain MEP's and parties from joining: "*This group has an image as very left and green. The image isn't correct. The rainbow-group is in fact a technical coordination group.*"¹¹ There were parties that actually espoused the EFA's ideology, but that for pragmatic reasons – power – went to another group. Jordi Pujol i Soley – who was president of the *Generalitat* (the Catalan government)¹² since 1980 – gave a telling answer to Nelly Maes's question whether his party *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* (CDC) would join: "*Madame, j'aime votre musique mais je reste où je suis.*"¹³ The CDC stayed with the liberal group.

Nonetheless there was light at the end of the tunnel. A first shimmer in the darkness came in the summer of 1983, when *Plaid Cymru* stated it wanted to join the EFA. A second was the accession of Portugal and Spain to the EC in 1986. The EFA had good contacts there (see above). "*Basken en Katalanen weten wat de Volk-sunie te bieden heeft: vrijheid, onafhankelijkheid, werk- en vechtlust, voor het eigen volk en voor de anderen. Voor hen die hieraan willen meewerken zal de deur altijd open blijven staan*" affirmed *Euronieuws* at the end of 1985.¹⁴

Portugal and Spain in the EC: from disappointment to Garaikoetxea

"1985 was a disappointing year. There's still hope to prepare a new situation between 1987 and 1989," according to Verheirstraeten, at the start of 1986.¹⁵ Within the EFA all eyes were on the accession of Portugal and Spain to the EC. Upon accession, on January 1, 1986, the 'Europe of twelve' was a reality. The total number of seats in the European Parliament grew to 518, including the 24 Portuguese and 60 Spanish MEP's who for the time being had been appointed by the respective parliaments of the two new Member States.

But to which group would the southern nationalists look for a roof? "*Basken en Katalanen kijken verwonderd uit naar het nieuwe theater waar ze mogen meespelen. Eens zien of ze zich meteen gaan installeren bij de grote theatergezelschappen met het klassieke repertoire, of eerder bij de kleinere avant-garde gezelschappen, die konstant naar vernieuwing zoeken.*"¹⁶ The Rainbow group however did not appeal to them. The two Basques of PNV joined the EPP with which they had historical ties.¹⁷ However, they were prepared to negotiate on a nationalist group. CDC chose the liberal group. The Democratic Renewal party

Partido Renovador Democrático (PRD) of the Portuguese president Eanes – not really a nationalist party, but sympathetic to regionalism – did not join the group but remained independent.¹⁸ The EFA was deeply disappointed: “*Ze zijn verspreid nu, van liberalen, over kristendemokraten, gaullisten en socialisten. Het blijft echter onze taak de nationalisten te verzamelen omdat we ervan overtuigd zijn dat de enige solide basis voor het vormen van een eerlijke internationale samenleving de volkeren zijn en niet de centrale staten die de ontkenning van Europa zijn. We zullen echter doorgaan. Het zal niet moeilijk zijn aan nationalisten aan te tonen dat ze bij de grote politieke families slecht gehuisvest zijn. (...) Hun ogen zullen opengaan. Daar zullen wij voor zorgen...*”¹⁹

In June of 1987 the voters in Portugal and Spain for the first time went to the polling stations to elect their representatives in Strasbourg directly. In the Basque country a new party emerged: Eusko Alkartasuna (EA) with as its front man the charismatic Carlos Garaikoetxea Urriza, the former leader (*‘lehendakari’*) of the autonomous Basque government. The EA had split from the PNV in 1986 over policy differences and with the outdated party structure.²⁰ The ideological differences that were logically parked against the dictatorship, arose during the exercise of the political practice. The explanation of the split and later constitution of EA can be found in the social-democratic ideology faced with the christian democrat ideology of the PNV. EA created a single list with the Catalan Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) and the Galician Partido Nacionalista Galego (PNG). If the list managed to get one MEP, the EA promised to join the EFA.²¹ Which is what happened: Garaikoetxea was elected to the European Parliament.

Garaikoetxea was revered within the EFA. This translated passage from an article devoted to him makes this clear: “*It never got to the point where there was a contract between the VU, the EFA and the Basques. The Basque National Party (P.N.V.) led us up the garden path for a very long time and then decided to stay with the Christian*



Michele COLUMBU
(Ollolai, 1914)

The Sardinian Professor Columbu was born in 1914 in Ollolai, the small town of which he would be the Mayor for a short time in 1980. From 1974 to 1979, he was the National Secretary of

the Partito Sardo d’Azione (PSd’A) and, from 1979, he was a member of the Regional Council and the Party Chair for several years. From 1974 to 1976, he was a member of the Italian Parliament, having been elected as an independent candidate on the PCI list. In 1984, he was elected as a Member of the European Parliament from a joint list of EFA parties and thus brought the PSd’A into the European Free Alliance, of which he is an honorary member. He sat as a member of the Rainbow Group together with Jaak Vandemeulebroucke and Willy Kuijpers.

During the First World War, many Sardinians died and after the War, in 1921, the PSd’A was founded, clearly peace in mind (hence Columbu’s repeated protests against the establishment of a military NATO base on Sardinia (La Maddalena)). Successful political action on the part of the PSd’A and PNC led to the announcement in November 2005 of the withdrawal of US nuclear submarines. Michele Columbu wanted a Sardinia that was independent of Italy. His campaign to bring the problem of the inner, mountainous regions of Sardinia to the attention of the Sardinian political classes is very well known. Columbu embarked on a legendary walk through the whole of the island, from Cagliari in the south to Sassari in the north, in order to breathe new life into the Sardinian movement.

Today, he continues to adopt this militant stance, placing his great experience and wisdom at the disposal of young Sardinians.

In addition to his political activities, Columbu is also the author of several publications: **L’aurora e lontana: dalla Sardegna: racconti (Dawn is far away: from Sardinia: tales)** (1968) and **Senza un perché: romanzo (Without a reason: a novel)** (1992).

**Juan Carlos
GARAIKOETXEA URRIZA
(Pamplona, 1938)**



Carlos Garaikoetxea is married and the father of 3 children. He is a lawyer and has a B.Sc in Economic Sciences; he has engaged in professional activities in the business world and his law offices. Carlos Garaikoetxea was the Chairman of the **Cámara de Comercio e Industria de Navarra** (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Navarra), and he combined this activity with a variety of philanthropic and cultural work, particularly with a view to the protection of the Basque language and the promotion of the “**ikastolas**” (Basque schools) during the dictatorship of Franco. Carlos Garaikoetxea was elected as the President of the PNV at the end of the dictatorship and retired as the President of the Basque government in 1980 on account of his incompatibility with the mandate. He was the Chairman of the Consejo General Vasco (Gobierno provisional 1979-1980) and was elected as the **Lehendakari** (President of the Basque government) for two legislative periods (1980 en 1984). He was the Member of Parliament for Navarra, a Member of the European Parliament for two legislative periods and a Member of the Basque Parliament for five legislative periods. He was the President of the EFA (1989-1990) and Eusko Alkartasuna (Social Democrat Basque party) from the time of the founding conference in 1987 to the year 1999.

Carlos Garaikoetxea supported the idea of more autonomy for the Basque country writing articles and several publications in the media and a recent book “**Euskadi: la transición inacabada**” (The Basque Country: the incomplete transition). He is an honorary member of the EFA.

Democrats. There was no real alternative: there is a lot of sympathy for the radical Herri Batasuna, but from a political point of view their links to the terrorist ETA proved an insurmountable obstacle. And then there was the breach: Karlos Garaikoetxea (...) left the P.N.V. and founded a new party: Eusko Alkartasuna.”²²

Nationalism. Not terrorism

With the accession of Spain to the EC, ETA terrorism came to the fore in Europe. Even though many EFA parties expressed their solidarity with the Basque quest for autonomy, they rejected the use of violence and terrorism.²³ The EFA parties wanted to stress that autonomy could also be achieved through peaceful means: “*Binnen de Europese Gemeenschap staat Vlaanderen meer en meer als voorbeeld van een land dat zonder bloedvergieten zijn identiteit en zelfstandigheid aan het terugvinden is. Onze E.V.A.-partners staan samen met ons aan het roer van deze steeds groeiende internationale beweging.*”²⁴ This was repeated black on white in the Guernica manifesto of June 1988 (see Annex 4), but not without denouncing “*las situaciones de violencia institucional y, muy particularmente, el desprecio a los derechos colectivos de las comunidades naturales en estados considerados democráticos*”.²⁵ In a nutshell: there was not a Basque problem because ETA existed, but ETA existed because there was a Basque problem.²⁶

Corsica too was hit regularly by terrorist violence. Max Simeoni (UPC) stated in 1986: “*The UPC was also opposed to violence in political action but could not forget that it was living in a situation in which the democratic machinery was being undermined. There was violence in Corsica, which the media described as terrorism, though it*

was ultimately a case of political violence in a situation in which there was no other realistic alternative. One should therefore be cautious in using the term ‘violence’ and consider it in the light of the fact that there were no other options. (...) Although the problems were peculiar to each region, the fundamental issue was always the same – colonization by central government.”²⁷

The same nuance was made by Willy Kuijpers who said in an interview: “*Of het nu Koerden of Ieren zijn, wij moeten de vraag durven stellen van wie het geweld en het onrecht uitgaat.*

Meestal is dat niet van het onderdrukte volk dat vaak na lang plagen en sarren tot bomaanslagen overgaat, waarmee ik overigens die aanslagen niet goedkeur.”²⁸

Holistic regionalism

The hobbyhorse par excellence of the EFA was regionalism and the Europe of Peoples. Kuijpers’ report about European policy on minority languages and cultures is an example of this: “(...) to dismantle national borders, an essential aim for a progressive European movement having as its basic philosophy the right of self-determination in a European context. Respect for individuality was of fundamental importance, since one of Europe’s principal sources of wealth was its diversity.”²⁹ The EFA parliamentarians really were no single-issue politicians, even though they pursued the regionalist line as much as possible, both geographically – with inter alia actions on Eritrea and the Kurds in Iraq and Turkey, and thematically – to different areas of policy. For example they spoke out in favour of mining in those regions that depended on it: an EFA colloquium with professors from Scotland, Flanders and Wales spoke out against the EC plans to bring mining to an end. They also opposed agriculture on too large a scale, by promoting mixed family farms. One endeavoured to let the “regions lagging behind” in Europe benefit from additional financial aid through the European Fund for Regional Development.³⁰ The weaker regions too of course had their place in Europe. They also reacted against the European Act (1986) which was deemed to have an all too centralist angle.³¹ The Guernica manifesto (cf. supra) stated that the Act should not just deal with free trade: “*Suprimir las aduanas para favorecer el comercio, y mantenerlas para dividir espacios culturales resultarla una triste ironia. La Alianza Libre Europea insta especialmente a la Comunidad Europea y a los Estados a romper las fronteras que dividen aún pueblos con*



Willy KUIJPERS
(Leuven, 1937)

Willy Kuijpers describes the origins of his involvement with the EFA during the sixties. Kuijpers was involved with activities in Belgium in his role as a supporter of the Flemish movement, but he

also championed the cause of “**oppressed peoples and minorities**” in other parts of the world, as he put it. This could apply to French Flanders, about which he stated that the Flemings “**have literally been rendered verbally dead as a result of the presence of French centralist constitutional law in their Dutch culture.**” Better known are the activities which he has pursued (together with Walter Luyten) in the Basque territory and on behalf of the Iraqi Kurds. It is no wonder that Willy Kuijpers has since the beginning been involved with the European Free Alliance, of which he is an honorary member. “**State nationalism with its suffocating centralism was obvious in its imperialism! A Europe-of-the-regions and of-the-peoples would become our dream,**” he states retrospectively. In 1984, he was elected as a Member of the European Parliament, where he sat with Jaak Vandemeulebroucke and Michele Columbu in the first Rainbow Group. Of particular importance was Kuijpers’ report on the languages and cultures of the regional and ethnic minorities of the European Community which was adopted in 1987. Kuijpers was not re-elected in 1989.

In that year, he became a Member of the Senate in Belgium and remained there until 1995, the same year in which he became a Member of the first directly elected Flemish Parliament. Previously, he had already been a representative for the VU in the Belgian Chamber (1971-1984). He had for a long time been active in the youth movement and was also interested in educational affairs, although development co-operation also attracted his interest. Kuijpers was also known for his unconventional dress. Willy Kuijpers is currently the Mayor of Herent, a mandate which he has had since 1995.

una misma cultura para que puedan desarrollar conjuntamente su personalidad, enriqueciendo el acervo cultural de Europa.”³²

But the EFA also had its own opinion about peace and security, which was established in Sardinia in 1988. The position of the EFA was that an efficient security and peace policy was based on the renunciation of the use of violence and of the theory of deterrence, the value of regional input, the cooperation between East and West, dialogue with the Islamic world and the recognition of People’s right to self-determination.³³ A resolution of Columbu, Kuijpers and Vandemeulebroucke against the production of chemical weapons and their presence in Europe was approved by the European Parliament in June 1986.³⁴ Kuijpers followed up on this matter and after the Iraqi poison gas attack on the Kurdish city of Halabja (March 1988) he took the initiative for a resolution which condemned Iraq and for a resolution in favour of a blanket ban on chemical weapons.

In addition, the EFA programme also contained a number of ‘green’ items, which is reflected by their critical stance on the TGV (high speed train). The nuclear disaster in Chernobyl (April 1986) was a – renewed – request for a moratorium on nuclear energy and to look at alternative sources.

Young EFA

Even though contacts existed for years between the VU-Youths (VUJO) and the nationalist youth organisations from inter alia Catalonia, Friesland, the Aosta valley and Scotland, it was decided in the winter of 1985 – after a meeting between VUJO and the Basque youths of PNV, to set up an international non-governmental organisation.³⁵ This occurred during an international conference of nationalist youths in Bilbao (the Basque country) from July 13 to July 20, 1986.³⁶ Twelve nationalist youth organisations signed – symbolically

George LESLIE (Glasgow, 1936)

George Leslie has been a Member of SNP since 1965. He became the Executive Vice-Convenor for the SNP in 1967 and the Senior Vice-Convenor in 1969. After a break from politics from

1971-1975, he became a member of the National Executive Council (NEC) and was the Executive Vice-Convenor from 1983-1986. After another break from politics from 1990-1994, he became a member of the SNP National Council in 1995. As a result of their

efforts from 1983 to 1989, he and Allan Macartney succeeded in persuading the SNP to become a member of the EFA. He had always thought of the EFA as the natural home for SNP. **“A lot of small parties came together in EFA as a family,”** he remembers. **“Of course, SNP wanted autonomy, even independence, but we had also other things in common.”** In his opinion, the EFA always was, and still is, a catalyst for change, in its own small way.

Looking back on his time with the EFA, George Leslie said: **“We are so close to each other that a party philosophy has been developing, as well as a practical circulation of ideas. We found that beneficial for us. And we hope that SNP has been beneficial for others.”**



under the Guernica tree – the Memorandum of Understanding in which the construction of the Europe of Peoples in peace and solidarity with one and other, and the recognition of autonomy took centre stage in a close European context.³⁷

EFA – still too much of a Volksunie affair

In the meantime, the EFA was polishing its rough diamond further. The growing alliance required a sound structure “*without necessarily requiring a bureaucratic and excessively formal organization,*” according to Vandemeulebroucke who continued as chairman.³⁸ He felt that the EFA bore too much the mark of the VU. This was also true financially, as becomes clear from this quote: “*Herman Verheirstraeten proposes to organise a general EFA-meeting once a year. Volksunie cannot afford to finance it twice.*” And further on: “*Herman Verheirstraeten says Volksunie pays at this moment everything. Falkena proposed to take a decision on a member contribution. (...) Falkena says EFA already agreed on this proposal. However it was never applied. It's normal to pay a small amount. There has to be a certain responsibility for each other (...).*”³⁹ Also the newly elected members and the enlarged Bureau had to distribute the responsibilities more. The Bureau was made up of three EFA – MEP's, in addition to Roelof Falkena (FNP), Alexis Bétemps (UV) and Gustave Alirol (VVAP) who had been appointed by the General Assembly.⁴⁰

It was decided in 1984 that parties could become members in two ways. Democratic and peaceful parties from the EC who were involved in politics and took part in elections at the regional level, could become actual members. Parties represented in the European Parliament, without being members of the Rainbow group, could request to become observer members – although only until the next European elections (they wanted to know



**Jaak VANDE-
MEULEBROUCKE**
(Avelgem, 1943)

The Fleming Vandemeulebroucke holds a licentiate degree in History and worked as a teacher and lecturer. Same as Maurits Coppieters, he subscribed to the view that

sees a link between Flemish nationalism and emancipation movements in the Third World. During the 1970's, he was elected town councillor and member of parliament for the Volksunie (VU), the party where he went on to become deputy-chairman from 1986 to 1989. In 1980, Vandemeulebroucke became political advisor to the European Parliament where he worked with MEP Maurits Coppieters. One year later, he was one of the founding fathers of the European Free Alliance (EFA). When he succeeded Maurits Coppieters in the European Parliament (March 1981), Vandemeulebroucke was voted chairman of the EFA, as well as of the Rainbow coalition. Vandemeulebroucke stayed on as MEP for the VU until 1998. Both in Flanders as well as in Europe, Vandemeulebroucke made a name for himself on the strength of his fight against the ‘hormone maffia’. A topic to which he devoted two books: **De hormonenmaffia** (The hormone maffia) (1993) and – with Bart Staes who had been his Parliamentary aide in the European Parliament as his co-author – **Het Vlees is zwak** (The Flesh is weak) (1996). His brochure **Europa, omzien naar morgen** was also published in English: **Europe, looking back for tomorrow**.

Following the disintegration of the VU, Vandemeulebroucke chose to join the Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA). As such, he spoke out against the veto Spirit used to oppose the N-VA joining.

Asked as to how he looks back on his time with the EFA, Jaak Vandemeulebroucke, who is an honorary member of the EFA, answered: “**Those were incredibly exciting times in which I enjoyed a tremendous amount of friendship, met interesting people, witnessed a great deal of idealism. I sincerely hope it is here to stay and carry on. It has been a dream which should not go to waste. It is a worthwhile cause.**”

where people stood, quickly). Also parties from candidate Member States of the EC could become observer members, until their accession – a clear invitation to the Portuguese and (especially) the Spanish parties. At the end of 1985, the EFA already counted eighteen nationalist parties.⁴¹

The usefulness and necessity of cooperation slowly started dawning. Laurenz Paasch (PDB) pointed out that cooperation between the party secretariats and that of the EFA wasn't optimal and was wondering "*whether the policy adopted by the MEPs was correctly interpreted in the regions.*"⁴² Kuijpers impressed upon the EFA partners to engage in further exchanges between them. He also thought that "*too little advantage was taken of Europe*": not enough files were being passed on to MEP's. Vandemeulebroucke wanted EFA in the European Parliament to be the multiplier of regional and local action: "*MEPs had a duty to give regional and local efforts a higher profile in the European Parliament. The Frisians had realised this and often called on MEPs, and this had already led to effective political action. The Bretons, the people of Languedoc, the Alsatians and recently even Max Simeoni and his supporters had been in Strasbourg to speak to the international press. This could apply to any region (...).*"⁴³ This way, the EFA partners that did not have their own member in the European Parliament, were nonetheless represented in Brussels or Strasbourg. Did not Coppieters say in Bastia: "*Je serai votre député à Bruxelles*" (I will be your representative in Brussels)?⁴⁴

They continually strived to convince the nationalist parties to join the Rainbow group, even though this was not always easy. PNV, CDC, Fiana Fail and SNP had all joined other groups, but were invited to EFA meetings for as long as the negotiations lasted. Verheirstraeten made a critical comment about this: "*(...) in a certain way we provide them an alibi. They're members of EFA (so they are nationalists) and nevertheless they're member of several different political groups in the European Parliament.*"⁴⁵ If they wanted to have their own group in 1989, time was high to decide.

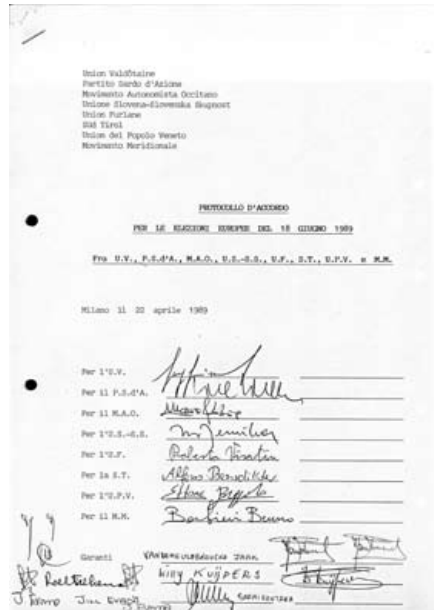
Towards the European Parliament elections of 1989

For the elections of June 1989, cooperation seemed to be the panacea to overcome guarantees, electoral thresholds, the unitary system and so on. Especially after Klaus Pöhle (study service European Parliament) in 1987 warned the EFA partners not to count on a uniform procedure for the 1989 elections.⁴⁶ In Spain the EA, ERC and PNG again joined forces in a common list '*Europa de los pueblos*' (Europe of the Peoples).⁴⁷ In France – *une et indivisible* – the autonomist parties weren't faring a great deal better. Here an exclusive EFA list was not possible: "*Bretoenen, Basken, Occitanen, Corsikanen, Vlamingen, Catalanen en Elzassers halen samen, zelfs met de steun van een handvol Savoyards niet de nodige 5% om verkozenen te hebben. Het kiessysteem marginaliseert kleinere partijen en dat maakt ze erg onaantrekkelijk bij de bevolking.*"⁴⁸ Gustave Alirol (Partit Occitan, the former VVAP) coordinated the negotiations with Antoine Waechter of the French ecologists (Les Verts) and with other possible groups.⁴⁹ He obtained the requested (eligible) third place, which was taken up by the Corsican Max Simeoni.⁵⁰

In Italy too, the "*marginalised regions*" were pooling their powers. Léonard Tamone (UV) made a call to repeat the list of five (Sardinians, Valdotans, Occitans, Friulians and Slovenes) from 1984 to obtain a seat.⁵¹ However, internal problems jeopardised such an alliance. The larger parties also threatened to introduce an electoral threshold *à la française*.

The alliance therefore needed to be beefed up urgently.⁵² In April 1989 eight parties signed a cooperation agreement, under the common denominator ‘Federalismo’.⁵³ Because of internal Italian difficulties it was not possible to make them cooperate with the Lega Lombarda of Umberto Bossi, who at the start of 1989 had made it known that he wanted to become a member of the EFA and the group.⁵⁴

In Great Britain, Plaid Cymru and the SNP again cooperated closely, but not at European level. The SNP MEP chose the gaullists, while Plaid Cymru wanted to come to the Rainbow group, but ironically did not have a seat. At the beginning of 1986 Plaid Cymru promised “(to) put a lot of pressure on them to leave the gaullist group (...).”⁵⁵ They were successful: in April the two parties concluded an agreement to form a single political group after the legislative elections.⁵⁶ Dafydd Williams hoped that ‘his’ Plaid Cymru and the SNP would one day cooperate in the European Parliament as well.⁵⁷ The party expected to win one seat. The



For many parties, cooperation was necessary to contest the European elections. In 1989, eight parties from Italy agreed to cooperate under the common denominator ‘Federalismo’.



Plaid Cymru and SNP cooperated closely in the United Kingdom. Not so on the European level. Plaid Cymru tried to have SNP join the EFA. SNP however made clear not to decide until after the elections. From left to right: Peter Kylan (Plaid Cymru), Jill Evans (Plaid Cymru), Willy Kuijpers (VU) and Dafydd Ellis Thomas (Plaid Cymru).

SNP wanted to decide whether it would join the EFA only after the elections, and for the time being continued to be an observer.⁵⁸

Conclusion 1984-1989

Still the regionalists and nationalists in the European Parliament were not unified under one independent EFA group. The Rainbow group allowed three – as of 1987 four – EFA parliamentarians to function independently in the European Parliament as a sub group, but they were not in a very strong position. It was not easy to convince other regionalist parties to become members of the Rainbow group, many of them did not even have an elected member. Some had different ideological convictions – such as the PNV that went to the EPP. Others, like the SNP, for the time being preferred the security of a large group over a small heterogeneous technical coordination group. This did not stop the EFA from profiling itself as the home of European regionalists. Furthermore, the regionalist issue in some countries, such as Portugal, was almost non-existent.

As Europe still did not have a uniform electoral procedure, the autonomist parties from inter alia France (with the Green party), Italy, and Spain were forced to forge alliances. These mixed lists came about from a ‘together we are strong’ strategy and were facilitated by the post-materialist issues in the EFA programme.

A number of positive points during these five years were the – eventual – *rapprochement* with the Basque country, in particular thanks to Karlos Garaikoetxea, and the first steps towards the creation of Young EFA in July 1986. All hope was vested in 1989, which in more than one sense was to be a year of revolution.

NOTES

- 1 At least 21 members from one single member state were required for establishing a group. If the members came from two countries, then the required number was 15. If they came from three countries, then 10 members were required, **Het Europees Parlement**, Luxemburg, November 1984, p. 16.
- 2 In full the Rainbow group was called: Federation of the Green Alternative European Links, Agalev-Ecolo, the Danish People’s Movement against Membership of the European Community, and the European Free Alliance in the European Parliament.
- 3 After a while also Marco Pannella began filibustering internally and due to the difficult cooperation with Pannella, hardly anyone wished to cooperate with him any longer, ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10952(5/1): Minutes EFA meeting of November 22-25, 1984 in Saint Vincent, p. 1; ADVN, interview with Jaak Vandemeulebroucke by Mathieu Vanhaelewyn, Antwerp, October 27, 2005.
- 4 Groenen en uiterst-rechts met eigen fractie in Straatsburg, in: **Nieuw Vlaanderen**, June 19, 1984; P. Delwit, E. Kùlahci & C. Van De Walle (eds.), **The Europarties. Organisation and influence**, Brussels, 2004, p. 267.
- 5 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10953(1/1): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of January 10, 1986 in Brussels, p. 2.
- 6 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10952(5/1): Minutes EFA meeting of November 22-25, 1984 in Saint Vincent, p. 1.
- 7 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10952(5/1): “Submission from George Leslie, executive vice-chairman (policy), Scottish National Party to meeting of the European Free Alliance at Val d’Aosta on 23rd November 1984”.
- 8 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10952(5/1): Minutes EFA meeting of November 22-25, 1984 in Saint Vincent, p. 1.

The 25 year history of EFA – 1984-1989

- 9 ADVN, interview with Jaak Vandemeulebroucke by Mathieu Vanhaelewyn, Antwerp, October 27, 2005; ADVN, interview with Nelly Maes by Mathieu Vanhaelewyn, Sinaai, December 13, 2005.
- 10 Regionalisten in één [...], p. 1.
- 11 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10953(1/1): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of January 10, 1986 in Brussels, p. 1.
- 12 Pujol held this office without interruptions until 2003.
- 13 “Madam, I like your music, but I’ll stay where I am”, ADVN, interview with Nelly Maes by Mathieu Vanhaelewyn, Sinaai, December 13, 2005.
- 14 “Basques and Catalans know what the Volksunie has to offer: freedom, independence, the will to work and fight, for its own people and for others. To those who want to participate in this the door will always be open”, Naar een uitbreiding van de Europese Vrij Alliantie?, in: **Euronieuws, de wis-brief van de Volksunie**, vol. 3, no. 4, [December 1985], p. 3.
- 15 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10953(1/1): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of January 10, 1986 in Brussels, p. 1.
- 16 “Basques and Catalans look with bemusement at the new theatre in which they will play a role. Let us see whether they will start playing to the larger theatre groups straight away with the classic repertoire, or whether they prefer the smaller avant-garde groups that constantly look to innovate”, Naar een uitbreiding van de Europese Vrije Alliantie?, in: **Euronieuws, de wis-brief van de Volksunie**, vol. 3, no. 4, s.d., p. 3.
- 17 **The contribution of EAJ-PNV to the European Convention**, S.J., s.n., s.d., pp. 8-11.
- 18 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10953(1/1): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of January 10, 1986 in Brussels, p. 1.
- 19 “They are scattered now, across the Liberals, the Christian Democrats, Gaullists and Socialists. However, it is still our task to continue bringing nationalists together as we are convinced that the only solid basis for creating an honest international society is the peoples and not the central states that are a negation of Europe. We will continue. It will not be difficult to demonstrate to the nationalists that by joining the larger parties they have found a bad home. [...] Their eyes will open. We will make sure of it...”, We zullen doorgaan, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 4, no. 2, March 7, 1986, p. 1.
- 20 D. Conversi, **The Basques, the Catalans and Spain. Alternative Routes to Nationalist Mobilisation**, London, 2000 (2), p. 152.
- 21 Uit de regio’s, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 5, no. 1, p. 22.
- 22 E.V.A. in Baskenland, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 6, no. 1, [April 1988], p. 21.
- 23 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10954(4/1): Minutes EFA meeting of September 7-8, 1987 in Brussel, p. 23.
- 24 “Within the European Community, Flanders serves more and more as an example of how a country can rediscover its identity and independence without bloodshed. Our EFA partners together with us are at the helm of this growing international movement”, Europa van vrije volkeren, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 9, September 1991, no. 2, p. 1.
- 25 “[...] the occurrences of institutional violence, and especially the contempt for the collective rights of the natural communities in states which are considered to be democracies [...]”, ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10968(3/1): “Manifiesto de la A.L.E. en Gernika”, June 12, 1988, p. 3.
- 26 C. Dutoit, **De Basken en hun strijd**, Brussels, 1984, p. 50, 53.
- 27 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10953(3/1): Minutes Rainbow Group meeting of July 3-4, 1986 in Cardiff, p. 3.
- 28 “Whether we are talking about the Kurds or the Irish, we need to dare to ask ourselves the question: who is perpetrating the violence and injustice? Usually it is not the oppressed people that after long periods of bullying and goading start using bomb attacks, which does not mean that I condone those attacks by the way”, E. Claessens, Kijpers moet dood. Het was rond de Belgische ETA, in: **Topics**, February 1, 1984, p. 23.
- 29 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10954(1/1): Minutes EFA meeting of February 11-14, 1987 in Ljouwert, p. 2.
- 30 Jaak Vandemeulebroucke op de bres voor de achtergebleven regio’s, in: **Euronieuws: de wis-brief van de Volksunie**, sine vol., December 1985, sine no., pp. 6-7; Geef de Westhoek een toekomst, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 4, no. 3, p. 8.
- 31 The European Act was signed in February 1986 and entered into force on July 1, 1987. It was aimed at renewing the European institutions and the decision-making process by giving the European Parliament broader competences and also by preparing the single market. It furthermore laid the foundations for the nineties’ reforms concerning European political cooperation, A. BLAIR, **The European Union [...]**, pp. 59-61.

- 32 “Abolishing borders in order to facilitate trade, but on the other hand maintaining them to divide cultural spaces, is a pitiful proof of sarcasm. The European Free Alliance urges the European Community and the member states to tear down the borders that still divide peoples with a single culture, so that they can jointly develop their identity [...]”, ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10968(3/1): “Manifiesto de la A.L.E. en Gernika”, June 12, 1988, p. 3.
- 33 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10955(2/1): Minutes Rainbow Group meeting of May 2-5, 1988 in Sardinia; De EVA vergaderde in Sardinië, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 6, no. 2, July 14, 1988, pp. 14-16.
- 34 **Official Journal of the European Union**, C 176, July 14, 1988, P, 0118; EVA-motie chemische wapens gestemd, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 4, June 1986, no. 3, pp. 6-7.
- 35 De Jong Europese Vrije Alliantie, in: **Euronieuws, de wis-brief van de Volksunie**, vol. 3, no. 4, [December 1985], p. 5.
- 36 Own collection of documents, written testimony by Bart Staes to Mathieu Vanhaelewyn, December 6, 2005: letter from Filip Germaey, June 20, 1986.
- 37 Announcement in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 6 and no. 3, p. 2; Jong-EVA gesticht in Guernika, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 4, no. 4, [November 1986], p. 12.
- 38 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10952(5/1): Minutes EFA meeting of November 22-25, 1984 in Saint Vincent, p. 3.
- 39 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10953(1/1): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of January 10, 1986 in Brussels: internal organisation of EFA.
- 40 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10952(5/1): Minutes EFA meeting of November 22-25, 1984 in Saint Vincent, p. 4.
- 41 Colofon in: **Euronieuws: de wis-brief van de Volksunie**, vol. 3, no. 4, [December 1985].
- 42 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10953(4/1): Minutes Rainbow Group meeting of July 3-4, 1986 in Cardiff, pp. 3-4.
- 43 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10953(4/1): Minutes Rainbow Group meeting of July 3-5, 1986 in Cardiff, p. 2.
- 44 ADVN, interview with Max Simeoni by Eva Mendoza, Antwerp, July 14, 2005.
- 45 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10953(1/1): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of January 10, 1986 in Brussels, p. 2.
- 46 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10954(4/1): Minutes EFA General Assembly of September 7-8, 1987 in Brussels, p. 8.
- 47 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10955(2/1): Minutes Rainbow Group Meeting of May 2-4, 1988 in Sardinia, p. 2; Eusko Alkartasuna, **Programa-marco electoral para las elecciones al Parlamento Europeo (Junio-89): Coalición ‘Europa de los Pueblos’**, 1989.
- 48 “Britons, Basques, Occitans, Corsicans, Flemish, Catalans and Alsations put together, even with the help of a handful of Savoyards, would not meet the required 5% to have elected members. The electoral system marginalises smaller parties and this makes them very unattractive to the population”, In de regio’s, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 6, no. 3, December 9, 1988, pp. 8-9.
- 49 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10954(4/1): Minutes EFA General Assembly of September 7 and 8, 1987 in Brussels, p. 6.
- 50 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10968(4/1): Guy Cambot to Max Simeoni and François Alfonsi, December 21, 1988; Max Simeoni candidat avec les Verts au nom de l’Europe des peuples, in: **Arritti**, January 26, 1989.
- 51 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10955(4/1): Minutes Rainbow Group Meeting of September 1-2, 1988 in Brussels, p. 4.
- 52 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10955(2/1): Minutes Rainbow Group Meeting of May 2-4, 1988 in Sardinia, p. 4.
- 53 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10968(4/1): “Protocollo d’accordo per le elezioni Europee del 18 giugno 1989”, April 22, 1989.
- 54 H. Verheerstraeten, Nationalisten in eigen euro-fraktie, in: **Wij**, September 22, 1989, p. 12.
- 55 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10953(1/1): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of January 10, 1986 in Brussels, p. 2.
- 56 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10953(4/1): Minutes Rainbow Group meeting of July 3-4, 1986 in Cardiff; ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10953(4/1): “Communique for joint meeting of national executive committees of Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party”, April 12, 1986.
- 57 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10953(4/1): Minutes Rainbow Group meeting of July 3-4, 1986 in Cardiff.
- 58 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10955(2/1): Minutes Rainbow Group of May 2-4, 1988 in Sardinia, p. 2.

EFA in the third legislative period (1989-1994)

The second Rainbow Group: home at last

What had not been possible during the previous two elections became so in 1989: the formation of a distinct group. Four Danish MEPs belonging to Folkebevægelsen mod EF wanted to continue to develop their co-operation with their EFA colleagues, of whom there were now nine. Vandemeulebroucke and Garaikoetxea were re-elected, and Blaney, who narrowly failed to be elected in 1984, was again present for the Independent Fianna Fail. The Scottish Nationalist Winnie Ewing was now persuaded to join, after having belonged to the gaullists for two legislative periods. Max Simeoni (UPC) and Mario Melis (PSd'A) had both been elected from a joint list of regionalists in France and Italy respectively. Reinforcement also came from Andalucia in the form of Pedro Pacheco (Partido Andalucista). Lega Lombarda was represented in the Group by two MEPs, Luigi Moretti and Francesco Enrico Speroni.¹ These thirteen members of the European Parliament called themselves the Rainbow Group. Negotiations conducted with the rapidly growing group of Green Euro MPs with a view to the formation of a common group had not been successful. In *Euronieuws*, we read that their requirement was that the identity of the group should primarily be 'green' and that the Volksunie could not be so as they were "*peut-être pas des racistes mais au moins des xenophobes linguistiques*" (maybe not exactly racists, but in any case, linguistic xenophobes) according to a letter from ECOLO-elected Ernst de la Graete to Max Simeoni.² This did not alter the fact that, in October of that year, the leader of the German Greens, Dorothee Piermont, joined the Rainbow Group, of whom Vandemeulebroucke was the President.³

The Rainbow Group bucked a trend in the history of EFA. For the first time, EFA MEP's were the dominant members of a group. The Rainbow Group consisted of two factions: Piermont and the Danes on the one hand and the regionalists and the nationalists on the other. This EFA (sub-)group became detached from the predominance of the VU. To cap it all, Kuijpers was not re-elected. For the first time, the EFA belonged to a group which was not only concerned with technical co-operation; there was a genuine basic programme and meetings were held.⁴ The programme contained seven "points of interest" and was unmistakably inspired by the EFA:

1. alignment of the European economy with the regional economy;
2. alignment of the economic and social areas;
3. alignment of the economy and ecology;
4. alignment of technological and human society;

**Heribert
BARRERA I COSTA
(Barcelona, 1917)**



The Catalan Heribert Barrera i Costa is the historical leader of Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) and has also been the President of the Catalan Parliament for a long time. The left-wing Republican succeeded the Basque Carlos Garaikoetxea (EA) as a member of the European Parliament in March 1991. In this capacity, he would among other things argue the case for the restoration of the independence of the Baltic states and the recognition of the right of the peoples of the former Yugoslavia to self-determination. Barrera i Costa was also a proponent of the protection of the cultural and linguistic richness of Europe. Being unable to speak his own language in the plenary meeting, he stood out because of his consistent use of the English language. Barrera i Costa is an honorary member of the EFA.

5. alignment of monoculture and own culture;
6. alignment with all four corners of the world;
7. alignment of regional thinking and European thinking.⁵

In November 1989, Garaikoetxea became the President of EFA.⁶ He followed Vandemeulebroucke, who had been President for eight years. When the Basque was elected as a member of the regional Parliament of the Basque Country at the end of 1990, he left Strasbourg and was followed in the European Parliament by the Catalan Heribert Barrera i Costa (ERC). As the regulations stipulated that the President of EFA had to be a member of the European Parliament, Garaikoetxea could not continue as President. Vandemeulebroucke was the Deputy President until Winnie Ewing was elected at the General Assembly at the end of September 1991.⁷ At the same meeting, a new Bureau was formed. According to the regulations, this had to consist of three members of the European Parliament and three members who did not belong to the

European Parliament. These were obviously in addition to the President (Ewing), the Deputy President (Alirol) and the Secretary (Verheirstraeten).¹³ In this way, parties which did not have any representatives in the European Parliament were more closely involved with the organisation.⁸

The importance of EFA as an umbrella organisation was not to be underestimated in the case of small(er) parties such as the Fryske Nasjonale Partij and Plaid Cymru, which were not then able to send anyone to the European Parliament. They continued to have every interest in joint EFA activity, as is apparent from a letter from Dafydd Williams: “*As a party without EP representation, Plaid Cymru depends to a great extent on information from the EFA on the progress of the intergovernmental conferences and on the position taken by the Rainbow Group on specific matters. (...) The reports that we have received from EFA meetings in the past has been important to our campaigning (...).*”⁹ The same applied and applies to the Frisians of the FNP: “*De EFA hat foar de FNP ûntjûn ta in finster op ‘e wrâld. De EFA feroarsaket tagelyk, dat de FNP net hingjen bliuwt yn pleatslik tinken.*”¹⁰

The growth of the organisation appealed to the regionalist and nationalist ideology of various (small) groups which then joined the EFA and/or the Group. Thus it was that the Portuguese Pedro Canavarró (PRD) moved from the Socialist Group to the Rainbow Group at the end of 1990.¹¹ One and a half years later, Isidoro García Sánchez (AIC-Agrupaciones Independientes de Canarias) became the sixteenth member of the Group in the European Parliament. In 1989, he was on a European list with PNV. It was mutually agreed that the elected member, the EFA member Juan Antonio Gangoiti Llaguno, should

make way for the regionalist Sánchez in 1992.¹² In other words, the Rainbow Group had members “from Scotland in the north to Andalusia in the south and from the Canary Islands in the west to Germany in the east.”¹³ In March 1990, Lega Lombarda became an effective member of the EFA.¹⁴ In September 1991, Unitat Catalana (UC), Slovenska Skupnost (the party for the Slovenian minority in Italy) and the Union für Süd Tirol (which broke away from the Südtiroler Volkspartei, whose elected member was a member of the EFA) also joined.¹⁵

According to the new regulations of 1991, a political party could only become a full member and thus be entitled to vote in the General Assembly if it had already been a member of the EFA for a year as an observer. The regulations also stipulated that a country or region could be represented within the EFA by only one party. Its use has come under pressure on several occasions, but has nevertheless been retained “*unless the representative of a people put forward a specific request.*”¹⁶

Following the Treaty of Maastricht (cf. infra), which had the aim of reassessing the role of transnational parties, the EFA made further changes to its regulations in 1993 “*in order to be ready in time.*” What was at stake was no minor matter: European parties were ultimately to be eligible for official recognition and European finance.¹⁷ The alliance of nationalist and regionalist parties had in the meantime been transformed into a “*European Federation of National and Regional Parties*”. At the General Assembly in Cardiff (October 1993), efforts were made to gauge the extent to which members of the EFA wanted to form such a transnational party.¹⁸ The members gave their approval for the regulations to be changed, but it was decided only to change what was really necessary for the time being.



**Mario MELIS (Arbatax,
1921 – Nuoro, 2003)**

Mario Melis was a Doctor of Laws and a lawyer. He was one of the most prestigious exponents of the Partito Sardo d’Azione (PSd’A). Politics were a constant feature of his life.

Among other things, Melis was the Mayor of Oliena and a Member of the Provincial Council of Nuoro. In 1969, he became a Member of the Sardinian Parliament, where he showed himself to be an expert at the level of economic development in Sardinia. With the parliamentary group of Sinistra Indipendente, he was a Member of the Senate, from 1976 to 1979, appearing as an independent candidate on the PCI lists. From 1979 to 1983, he returned to the Sardinian Council.

He was the Chairman of Economic Affairs. Later, he became the Minister of the Environment. In 1983, he was elected as a representative in the Italian Parliament, but the following year he left this mandate for what it was, when he became the Prime Minister of Sardinia. He continued as such until 1989, when he was elected as a Member of the European Parliament (1989-1994) from the “**Europa per il federalismo**” (Europe for federalism) list. Immediately after the declaration of independence of Lithuania, Melis was a member of the delegation of the Rainbow Group which travelled to Vilnius (February 1991).

The first and only Sardinian President in the history of self-determination, he has been a lively member of the central government. His political will has always been very strong. A fighter until the last minute, he has always known how to direct the most genuine and popular feelings of the Sardinian people. Mario Melis is an honorary member of the EFA.

Luigi MORETTI
(Nembro, 1944)



Luigi Moretti was a surveyor by profession and was the head of a technical department when he was elected as the Member of the European Parliament for Lega Lombarda in 1989. Prior to this, he had already been politically active as the Provincial Secretary of Lega Lombarda. He sat with Francesco Speroni in the Second Rainbow Group in the European Parliament. Among other things, he sat on the Committee on Regional Policy and the Committee on External Economic Relations. After the uproar about Lega Nord in the spring of 1994, for example the racist comments of the Leader, Umberto Bossi, Moretti and Speroni left this Group. During the next legislative period, they sat with the Liberals, but not without approaching the EFA again in 1996. In 1999, however, there was a definite end to the collaboration with these Members of the European Parliament.

Towards an EFA organisation for the Youth?

After the previously casual contact which had been made since 1986 (cf. supra), some progress has been made with the establishment of a young people's regionalist movement within the organisation. In October 1992, the young people's branch of Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya decided to invest much effort in the establishment of an international association "*which would be able to group as much (sic) as possible youth wings from all the different political parties whose (sic) at the moment don't have an own state*".¹⁹ At the beginning of 1993, the first meeting was held between Gazte Abertzaleak (the young people's movement of EA), Joventuts d'ERC, the Young Scottish Nationalists (YSN) and Volksuniejongeren (VUJO). This led to the emergence of the "Youth for a Europe of Free Peoples" manifesto. Later that year, at the meeting in Cardiff, it was decided to establish a young people's organisation within EFA. The intention was to attract more associations and thus make the whole entity even

more international.²⁰ However, there were insufficient funds to establish a permanent secretariat. It would continue to be a matter of informal contact, without the existence of a regular and structured organisation until 2001 (cf. infra).²¹

1989 and the disintegration of Eastern Europe

The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 heralded the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The East European satellite states had the prospect of independence and co-operation with the West, particularly when Mikhail Gorbachev declared at a meeting of the Warsaw Pact in the summer of 1989 that "*each people determines the future of its own country. There must be no interference from outside*".²² The importance of the revolutionary year of 1989 was also not lost on the EFA. "*Om aan deze nieuwe situatie het hoofd te kunnen bieden moet het zelfbeschikkingsrecht van alle volkeren worden geëerbiedigd. De ontwikkeling die de verschillende volkeren in Oost-Europa doormaken moet voor ons een stimulans zijn, aangezien hierin de kracht tot uiting komt waarmee de gevoelens van de volkeren na decennia van onderdrukking hun weg zoeken. Maar tegelijkertijd dreigt het gevaar dat een reactie op deze gevoelens ontstaat. Daarom moeten wij duidelijk laten blijken dat wij alleen willen opkomen voor volkeren die streven naar instandhouding van hun cultuur en hun legitieme nationale belangen, en nooit of te nimmer voor volkeren die streven naar een onverdraagzaam, jacobijnsgetint en centralistisch nationalisme.*"²³ In 1991, the Warsaw Pact came to an end. The

members of the EFA expressed their solidarity with the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) and “*de overige volkeren die opkomen voor hun nationale rechten in de USSR en riepen de rest van Europa op om de op democratische wijze tot stand gekomen wilsuïtingen te aanvaarden van de meerderheid van de volkeren zonder staat die het recht op een eigen staat opeisen op basis van hun geweten en hun collectieve wil, aangezien zij dit recht beschouwen als een onontbeerlijk instrument om hun cultureel erfgoed te beschermen en hun legitieme nationale belangen te behartigen.*”²⁴ For the EFA, freedom should be based on three main elements in the new situation after the Cold War: decommissioning of weapons, development and self-rule.²⁵

The reunification of Germany also ushered in the reunification of Europe. The lift of the Iron Curtain meant that more and more contacts could reasonably quickly be forged with parties from the former Eastern Bloc. The developments there brought regional matters and minority issues back on to the agenda. Garaikoetxea believed this confirmed the right of EFA to exist: “*Recent contact with the Baltic states strengthens our views with regard to the defence of self-rule and international solidarity.*”²⁶ The EFA spread its idea of a Europe of the Peoples to its contacts in Central and Eastern Europe.²⁷ In the period leading up to the possible accession of these countries, observers were in the meantime invited to the Rainbow Group’s conferences. This expansion should not take place too quickly, as the last thing people wanted was the creation of a rich Europe and a poor Europe.²⁸ Together with the Polish Farmers Party, the Rainbow Group organised an international conference on agriculture in Warsaw (September 1992), at which a paper by Blaney, a former Minister of Agriculture, was discussed.²⁹ The Slovenská Národná Strana (SNS) from Slovakia, one of the participants in the Conference³⁰, assured the EFA of its support in May 1992 and provided details of its contacts in some of the former USSR republics.³¹ There arose contacts with parties from Armenia, Croatia, Slovenia and Ibrahim Rugova’s Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), a movement which peacefully upheld the rights of Albanians. Vandemeulebroucke assured them that the Rainbow Group and the EFA would only recognise the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (the new Yugoslavia consisting of Serbia and Montenegro) if the rights of Kosovo were respected.³² The EFA issued the USSR with the same ‘ultimatum’: they called for the cessation of all non-humanitarian, social and economic help to the USSR until the Baltic peoples are guaranteed the right to self-determination.³³



**Pedro
PACHECO HERRERA**
Jerez de la Frontera,
1949)

The lawyer Pedro Pacheco studied law at the University of Sevilla and graduated in town planning. In 1979, he became the Mayor of his town of birth, Jerez de la Frontera. Four years previously, in 1975, he co-founded the Partido Socialista Andaluz (P.S.A.), but later left to form his own Partido Andalucista, which did well after passing through a difficult period. He was also the President. In 1989, Pacheco was elected as a Member of the European Parliament. In the regional elections in June 1990, however, he again became the Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament in Sevilla and was succeeded in the European Parliament by Diego de los Santos.

**Diego
DE LOS SANTOS LÓPEZ
(Viso del Alcor, 1936)**



Diego de los Santos López has been a surgeon since 1968 and a Professor of Surgery since 1980. He helped to found the Partido Andalucista in 1982 and was among other things a town councillor in El Viso del Alcor and Sevilla as well as a member of the Provincial Council. He was a member for Sevilla in the Cortes (Congreso de los Diputados) during the first legislative period (from 1979 to 1982) after the restoration of democracy in Spain. Later, Diego de los Santos was also Adjunto al Defensor del Pueblo Andaluz.

As agreed with the Christian Democrat mixed party candidate Juan Antonio Gangoiti Llagun, Diego de los Santos Lopez entered the European Parliament in 1992. Unlike Gangoiti, who sat with the EPP, de los Santos chose to sit with the Rainbow Group.

Looking back on his period as an MEP, Diego de los Santos says: **“My membership of the European Parliament during the legislative period of 1989-1994 is one that begins with the Fall of the Berlin Wall and continues with the reforms of the Common Agricultural and Fishing Policy and the signing of the Maastricht Treaty. It ends with the Europe of the Fifteen. All this causes me to reflect on the changes which I have experienced with regard to the European structure, as all these circumstances have proven to be exceptional. If we also bear in mind that I formed part of the Delegation of the European Parliament to the old Soviet Union, was a member of the Committees on Agriculture and Rural Development and Fisheries and the temporary Committee for the Study of the Treaty of the Union, and was a substitute member of the Committee on Regional Policy in the same Parliament, it will be easy to understand the effort of intensification which has been made during this last decade.”** Diego de los Santos Lopez is an honorary member of the EFA.

1992 and European integration

The European Union became a reality when the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) was signed. As had been agreed in the European Act of 1986, Europe now formed an internal market. The European member states also formed a Monetary Union (EMU) and a Political Union (EPU). ‘Maastricht’ also provided for the formation of a Committee of the Regions, a body consisting of representatives of local and regional authorities of the EU proposed by the member states which advised the Council or Commission on local and regional matters (education, youth matters, culture, etc.).³⁴ The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) led to a considerable expansion in the activities of the Committee. Since the Treaty of Nice (2000), members have had to have a local or regional mandate.³⁵

In May 1992, the EFA produced a balance sheet for ‘Maastricht’. Although an initial impetus was given to the recognition of the regions, there was still the feeling that the regions were being neglected. The latter still did not have any access to the European Court of Justice and questions were asked about the (lack of) power and the composition of the much too centralised Committee of the Regions. The EFA demanded that members be elected directly by the regions.³⁶ Some regions were not represented, while there were other member states which did not even have regionalist issues...³⁷ Whatever the case, the power of the Committee of the Regions was much too limited for the EFA and the Committee was consequently unable to represent anything more than a step towards the real goal: a two-chamber system with a Council of the Union and a Senate of the Regions. Some member states were already afraid that the regions would transform the Committee into such a Chamber.³⁸

In the case of the regionalists, the small instances of the implementation of ‘Maastricht’ were no more than a pyrrhic victory.³⁹ Actually, the EFA regarded ‘Maastricht’ as a fruitless at-

tempt: the regions had too little say in the process of European unification: “*The alternative to this centralistic, technocratic and remote Europe can only come through the recognition and the participation of the peoples and the regions in creating the institutional structure of the Union.*”⁴⁰

The Europe to which reference is made in the Treaty of Maastricht is too focused on an open market. Less attention is paid to the social aspect. Vandemeulebroucke sounded the alarm in a memorandum entitled “*A social Europe: too much blather and too little substance.*” He concluded that, unlike the ‘economic’ Europe, the ‘social’ Europe had shown frustratingly slow development since 1957.⁴¹

The members of the EFA were not sure about ‘Maastricht’, although they were proponents of the Economic and Monetary Union – “*a Europe of merchants*”, to paraphrase the Breton UDB. This was clear in France, where the ‘Maastricht’ autonomists were not simply able to go on the offensive. They found themselves faced with a dilemma: to vote for the Treaty (and hence a Europe of the member states) or against the Treaty, which they also did not want to do as they would then be siding with Jean-Marie Le Pen *cum suis*. How could they explain that they supported the European project, but that they did not like the Treaty as the regions had too little involvement in the project?⁴² In the case of the Corsican UPC, ‘Maastricht’ was a step towards the construction of Europe which did not go far enough: “*Un statut pour notre langue, un code des investissements pour préserver notre identité et notre intégrité; un statut fiscal dérogatoire pour développer notre économie; un véritable pouvoir législatif et de réelles compétences pour la Corse en tant que région européenne: le traité de Maastricht n’offre rien de tout cela, même pas en perspective.*” Consequently, the UPC called upon the population to abstain in the Maastricht referendum: “*ni oui, ni non*” (neither yes, nor no).⁴³



Max SIMEONI
(Lozzi, 1929)

The Corsican doctor Max Simeoni had been the Head of the Hospital of Bastia (the capital of Corsica) since 1962. He founded the **Unione di Populu Corsu** together with his brother Edmond. The

Simeoni brothers had been fairly well known for a long time for their ideas about an autonomous Corsica. They supported the nationalist revival in Corsica in the seventies. Max Simeoni had already established the nationalist journal **Arritti** in 1966. In 1967, he founded the ARC (**Action Régionaliste Corse**), which supported autonomy. In 1975, two policemen died during a siege when Edmond Simeoni and some others occupied the vineyards in Aléria. Edmond Simeoni was imprisoned for five years and the ARC was banned. Simeoni’s supporters then founded the **Associu di Patrioti Corsi** (APC) (literally the Association of Corsican Patriots) in 1976. This association was rather moderate compared with the more radical **Front de Libération Nationale de Corse** (FLNC) (Corsican National Liberation Front), which chalked up various outrages and was made illegal in 1983. The APC would like autonomy within the French State and the recognition of the Corsican people. This should all be achieved without violence. Unlike other parties, UPC also has no official armed branch. In 1977, the APC became the UPC, the **Unione di u Populu Corsu**, which was led by the Simeoni brothers. In 1982, the UPC entered the Corsican Parliament. Max Simeoni was elected as a Member of the European Parliament in 1989 from a joint list of regionalist parties and Greens. As the autonomist parties had given their support to the presidential candidate of the French Greens (Antoine Waechter), the UPC now had a place on the list of the Greens. Max Simeoni is an honorary member of the EFA.

There's nationalism, and then there's nationalism. The EFA versus the extreme Right, racism and xenophobia

When the European Parliament discussed a European Commission resolution on combating racism in June 1990, Vandemeulebroucke condemned any form of racism on behalf of the Rainbow Group. He stood up for diversity again and stated that the smaller regions ought to have sufficient resources to ensure that “*everyone can continue to be themselves.*”⁴⁴

Despite this, efforts were sometimes made to link the regionalists and the democratic nationalists of EFA with certain extreme nationalists. On more than one occasion, political opponents of EFA parties took advantage of this dubious image in their own countries. Thus, it was the case that, in 1990, the Labour member of the European Parliament David Morris accused Plaid Cymru of “*allying itself with some of the most objectionable racist bigots and xenophobes on the European political scene*” as a result of its membership of the EFA, which harboured “*dangerous and fanatically intolerant*” parties. This comment was aimed at Lega Lombarda, but it also included “*the likes of Neil Blaney from Ireland who was forced out of Fianna Fail because of his support for the IRA and a Basque Nationalist Party that has refused to sign an Anti-terrorist pact.*” Morris asked the Welsh party “*to investigate the policies of Plaid's European partners and, if his claims (were) found to be justified, to withdraw*

After the second Rainbow Group (1989-1994), the European elections of 1994 were disappointing for the EFA which had only three MEPs: Jaak Vandemeulebroucke (VU), Allan Macartney (SNP) en Winnie Ewing (SNP) – here with Jill Evans (Plaid Cymru).



the Party from the European Free Alliance.” He called on the party to distance itself as soon as possible from “*the unacceptable amalgam*” of the EFA.”⁴⁵

However, the EFA had done everything to distance itself from parties such as the Front National (FN) in France and the Vlaams Blok (VB) in Flanders, both members of the Technical Group of the European Right. The President, Vandemeulebroucke, stated in an interview that ‘the gulf between the ultra-nationalism of Jean-Marie Le Pen and Karel Dillen and our group was not able to be bridged’: “*het volksnationalisme en het Europees federalisme waar wij voor staan, heeft geen uitstaans met de bekrompenheid en het gevaarlijk ultra-nationalisme en egoïsme aan de andere kant. (...) Wij staan tegen Dillen en Le Pen zoals de openheid staat tegen de haat.*”⁴⁶ This was supported by a large report (“*of 530 pages*”) on the differences between the Rainbow Group and the extreme right. Apparently, this was necessary in view of the confusion caused by the growing number of extreme right-wing parties in Europe. François Waag of the Union du Peuple Alsacien (UPA) found that it was difficult to strive for autonomy in Alsace when faced with the extreme Right, “*which represented more than 20% of the electorate.*”⁴⁷

Lega Nord also caused some unrest in the EFA. After the European elections in 1989, its two elected members took up their place in the Rainbow Group. After the formation of Lega Nord and the request to join the EFA, various members of the EFA expressed their concerns with regard to the reputation of the newly formed party of North Italy.⁴⁸ In March 1991, after a speech delivered by Umberto Bossi, the Secretary-general of Lega Lombarda, a vote was taken in the General Assembly to join, but this was not unanimous: five were for, three were against, and there was one abstention.⁴⁹ There were frowns of disapproval at the aversion to Southern Italy displayed by the Lega, particularly as a result of the behaviour of the agent provocateur Bossi. In 1991, it was still the case that *Euronieuws* was stating reassuringly: “*Het is niet de praat van ‘migranten buiten’ die de Lega de wereld instuurt. Het is het gevecht tegen de centrale macht, tegen het wilde kapitalisme, tegen de concentratie van middelen dat de Lega is aangegaan. (...) Anderhalf jaar werken in het Europe Parlement hebben duidelijk gemaakt dat de Lega een democratische partij is, regionalistisch en vredelievend. Een partij die ook het sociaal programma van de EVA onderschrijft en mee verdedigt.*”⁵⁰

At the General Assembly in Cardiff (October 1993), Bossi was able to present the programme of the Lega to the members of the EFA. The response was lukewarm. Max Simeoni thought that it relied “*on an unmitigated liberalism, which is unacceptable. Some solutions*



Francesco Enrico SPERONI
(Busto Arsizio, 1946)

Francesco Speroni worked as a flight engineer for an Italian airline company. In his spare time he studied political sciences and international law. Among other things, he was the chairman of his

professional association in the early eighties. As a politician who belonged to the Lega Lombarda he was a member of the Town Councils of Albizzate (1986), Samarate (1987-1990) and Busto Arsizio (as of 1990). He was also the Regional Advisor for Lombardy, a Member of the Senate (from 1992 to 1999), and the Minister of Institutional Reform in the Berlusconi administration.

In 1989 he was elected as an MEP from the Lega Lombarda-Lega Nord list. Together with Luigi Moretti, he then joined the Rainbow Group. Speroni was mainly active on the Institutional and Legal Committee and was the co-rapporteur on the report on the uniform electoral procedure. In 1999 he was re-elected, but this time he sat in the Technical Group of Independent Members.

**Herman
VERHEIRSTRAETEN**
(Elsene, 1950)



Herman Verheirstraeten was one of the co-founders of the EFA in 1981. He worked for Jaak Vandemeulebroucke and, from 1981 through 1994, was the EFA's first secretary-general. A time which he once described as **"most probably the most exciting time in my professional career"**. Conceiving a platform and above all getting it accepted, seeking and above all finding new partners. I will never forget the EFA congresses with Bart Staes, under the inspiring

leadership of Jaak Vandemeulebroucke. The regionalists/nationalists were well-respected in the European Parliament because they put forward European alternatives for the centralist Europe held out by Spinelli and his Euro fanatics without a fatherland. As of 1984, the EFA started working together with the Eurosceptics, "because they prompted us to reflect on the quality of democracy", Herman said. **"Whatever the nature of the association, my wish for the EFA remains: "Be like the tortoise: it can only move forward when it sticks out its neck."**

Herman Verheirstraeten is currently secretary-general for the Independence and Democracy (ID) group in the European Parliament.

such as that which is concerned with the problem of immigration are simplistic and unrealistic and do not provide evidence of a willingness to find a solution to human problems." Mario Melis distrusted the lack of social solidarity.⁵¹

In the run-up to the Italian elections of 27 March 1994, the political bidding for votes became ever bolder, with the result that, at the beginning of March, the Rainbow Group convened a meeting in Milan to discuss the Lega Nord issue, at which it made it clear that it would never accept the Lega joining forces with the neo-fascist MSI.^{52, 53} Luigi Moretti, who represented the Lega in the Rainbow Group, assured *"que la Lega n'a et n'aura aucun lien avec le MSI – Alleanza Nazionale – et qu'elle veut poursuivre sa lutte pour l'installation d'un vrai régime fédéraliste dans l'état Italien. (...) Je ne peux que réaffirmer ce que nous avons dit à Milan: la Lega n'aura jamais d'accord avec le MSI."*⁵⁴ The group decided to wait for the outcome of the elections, but there was more division within the EFA about how to handle the matter of the Lega. The Bretons in the UDB, a distinctly left-wing party, showed the fiercest opposition. Ultimately, the Lega asked for its membership to be suspended until the next EFA meeting in April, that is to say until after the Italian elections.⁵⁵ The position of the President of the EFA, Ewing, was clear: *"If Lega Norte (sic) enter into a government in which the MSI are also in government I would have to move for the expulsion of Lega Norte (sic) both from the Rainbow Group*

*and the European Free Alliance. I have always made my position clear on this."*⁵⁶

The elections which were held in Italy in March 1994 were won by Forza Italia, the right-wing populist party of media magnate Silvio Berlusconi, with which Lega Nord entered into an agreement and which was to form a coalition with Alleanza Nazionale. The Italian issue dominated the General Assembly in April.⁵⁷ The suspension was accepted. Consequently, Lega Nord was no longer a member of the EFA. *"Elle comprend les responsabilités politiques que veut prendre la Lega Nord pour réformer les structures politiques de l'Italie dans le sens du fédéralisme. Toutefois l'A.L.E. ne peut accepter que l'un de ses membres, directement ou indirectement, entre dans un gouvernement avec une formation de nature totalitaire."*⁵⁸ On April 20, it was asked for the last time not to form any part of the coalition with Alleanza Nazionale: *"Nous exigeons que dans le cas contraire, vous quittiez le groupe comme vous l'aviez vous-même annoncé à Milan."*⁵⁹ This did not happen, and so Moretti and Speroni were no longer members of the Rainbow Group.

The problems with Lega Nord led to internal changes within the EFA: in March 1994, Herman Verheirstraeten handed in his notice as Secretary of the EFA. “*Enerzijds ben ik sekretaris van een fractie die zegt te zullen wachten met een beslissing, en anderzijds van een E.V.A. waarvan sommigen steigeren en onmiddellijk een beslissing willen nemen. Dat kan niet anders dan leiden tot misverstanden. Ik kan niet zomaar een loopje nemen met de deontologie en bij wijze van spreken een knecht zijn van twee meesters.*”⁶⁰ After the meeting in Milan (beginning of March 1994), Plaid Cymru left the EFA because of its discontent with Lega Nord.⁶¹

Towards the European elections of June 1994

The EFA became more attractive as more parties became members. In 1989, the EFA had unexpectedly tripled its number of members in the European Parliament. The second Rainbow Group was a success. The elected members were now able to make the programme of the EFA felt in the European Parliament as much as possible. It was now a matter of building on that success and trying to attract others to form a group of regionalists and nationalists after June 1994.

The EFA approached the European elections with the problems of Lega Nord still fresh in its memory. The exclusion of an electorally successful party which had joined the EFA *in tempore non suspecto* could mean a loss of electoral support. In addition, certain parties were subject to smear campaigns and the requirements for the formation of a group became even more strict. As of 19 July 1994, at least 13 members were required if the members came from four or more member states, 16 were required if they came from three member states and 21 were required if they came from two different states (Article 29 of the Parliamentary Rules of Procedure). Consequently, it was a matter of waiting to see whether the formation of a group of their own would be possible. It was no longer possible to rely on the Greens; that much was clear. If the Danes, who shared the same views as the regionalists in many areas, returned their support and if the regionalists stood firm, such a group would perhaps be able to exist. However, it was still necessary to contend with considerable electoral requirements in certain member states such as France: “*L’Alliance libre européenne (ALE) (...) se prononce en faveur de l’élection des députés européens, dès 1994, dans le cadre de circonscriptions régionales. Le nouveau mode d’élection devra respecter deux principes démocratiques de base: le découpage des circonscriptions devra coïncider avec la réalité culturelle et humaine des régions et non pas relever d’une logique technocratique et centraliste ni dépendre de considérations partisanses; chaque région, indépendamment de son poids démographique, devra être assurée de pouvoir élire au moins un député.*”⁶² It would appear to be a vain hope.

Conclusion 1989-1994

For the first time, the regionalists in the European Parliament had a group with its own outlook: “*(...) in short, the nations and regions, the rights of peoples and human rights, social justice and peace on earth, that’s the hallmark of the autonomists in the Rainbow Group,*” wrote Verheirstraeten.⁶³ This group consisted of experienced Members (Vandemeulebroucke celebrated his tenth anniversary as a member of the European Parliament in 1991), but

also included a number of ‘new’ faces. Ewing joined (and, with her, the SNP) after ten years of being with the gaullist Group. There were also complete newcomers such as the two Italian members of parliament who belonged to Lega Lombarda, the party which would later become part of the successful, but controversial Lega Nord. The implosion of the Soviet Union resulted in closer contacts being forged with the (re-)emerging nationalist parties of Central and Eastern Europe during the first half of the 1990s. Minorities in Slovakia and Kosovo found their way into the EFA and vice versa.

The Europe of ‘Maastricht’ was not the Europe which the EFA wanted. Consequently, reaction to the Treaty was mixed. The composition of the Committee of the Regions did not meet the expectations which the regionalists and the nationalists had with regard to the role of the regions in Europe. In addition, Europe remained too much of a free trade zone in its eyes and too little attention was paid to social aspects.

The period from 1989 to 1994 was – up to then – the high point in the EFA story. The breakthrough and success in the European Parliament meant that others would also find it opportune to make the change, for example the SNP. However, was the optimism justified?

NOTES

- 1 De Regenboogfractie in het E.P., in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 7, December 1989, no. 4, p. 16; ADVN, DA 30/7/K: J. Vandemeulebroucke, **De Regenboogfractie: de Europese Vrije Alliantie in het Europees Parlement**, S.I., [1989], p. 2.
- 2 Regionalisten in één [...], pp. 1-2.
- 3 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10963 (4/1): “Composition du Groupe Arc-en-ciel 1991”.
- 4 Regionalisten in één [...], p. 16; Zeven aandachtspunten voor morgen, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 7, November 1989, no. 3, p. 3.
- 5 Zeven aandachtspunten [...], p. 3; Een programma van en voor “inter-nationalisten”, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 8, December 1990-February 1991, no. 4, p. 5; ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10963(3/1): “Een nieuwe fractie”; ADVN DA 30/7/K: J. Vandemeulebroucke, **De Regenboogfractie: de Europese Vrije Alliantie in het Europees Parlement**, S.I., [1989].
- 6 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10957(4/3): Minutes EFA meeting of March 28-29, 1990 in Brussels, p. 1.
- 7 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10959(4/1): Minutes EFA General Assembly of September 30, 1990 in Ostend, p. 2; Jaarverslag oktober 1990-december 1991, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 10, March 1992, no. 1, p. 18.
- 8 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10959(4/1): Minutes EFA General Assembly of September 30, 1991 in Ostend, p. 2.
- 9 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10958(4/1): Dafydd Williams to Herman Verheirstraeten, May 29, 1991.
- 10 “To the FNP, EFA had always developed itself as a window on the world. At the same time EFA saw to it that the FNP didn’t only consider local issues”, K. Huisman, **Tusken Fryske dream en Nederlânske macht. Fjirtich jier Fryske Nasjonale Partij**, Ljouwert, 2003, p. 204.
- 11 Pedro Canavaro: vijftiende lid van de Regenboogfractie, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 8, December 1990-February 1991, no. 4, p. 3; <http://www.europarl.eu.int>.
- 12 Regenboogfractie verwelkomt zestiende lid, in: **Gazet van Antwerpen**, July 10, 1992.
- 13 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10963(3/1): “De Regenboogfractie in het Europees Parlement”, [presumably 1993].
- 14 Jaarverslag oktober [...], p. 18.
- 15 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10959(4/1): Minutes EFA General Assembly of September 30, 1991 in Ostend, p. 1.

- 16 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10965(1/1): Minutes EFA meeting of March 29-20, 1990 in Brussels, p. 2.
- 17 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10962(5/1): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of March 8, 1993 in Strasbourg.
- 18 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10962(5/2): Invitation EFA meeting in Cardiff, June 28, 1993.
- 19 ADVN, DA2005/306: "Youth for a Europe of Free Peoples. EFA session, Cardiff, 18th-19th october 1993": briefing notes.
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- 21 Own collection of documents, written testimony by Miquel Irujo Amezaga to Eva Mendoza, October 3, 2005; ADVN, interview with Geert Lambert by Mathieu Vanhaelewyn, Ostend, October 30, 2005.
- 22 Quoted by: A. Blair, **The European Union [...]**, p. 65.
- 23 "In order to be able to cope with this new situation, the right of all peoples to self-determination must be respected. The process of change which the different peoples of Eastern Europe have had to undergo should be a motivating factor for us, as it provides an opportunity whereby the feelings of the peoples can find an outlet after decades of oppression. However, there is at the same time the risk that there will be a reaction to these feelings. Consequently, we must make it clear that we only wish to support peoples who are striving to maintain their culture and their legitimate national interests and not peoples who are striving for an intolerant, Jacobin and centralist nationalism", ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10965(1/1): Minutes EFA meeting of March 28-29, 1990 in Brussels, pp. 2-3.
- 24 "[...] other peoples who were standing up for their national rights in the USSR and called upon the rest of Europe to accept the democratic declarations of intention of the majority of stateless peoples who demand the right to their own state according to the dictates of their own conscience and collective will, since they regard this right as an indispensable tool for the protection of their cultural heritage and the representation of their legitimate national interests", ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10965(1/1): Press release EFA meeting of March 28-29, 1990 in Brussels.
- 25 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10960(2/1): EFA resolution, [May 1992].
- 26 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10958(2/1): Minutes EFA meeting of March 11-12, 1991 in Strasbourg.
- 27 ADVN, DA30/7/K, "W. Kuijpers, 25 jaar op weg naar Europa der Volkeren (1966-1991)", p. 3; **E.F.A.-Newsletter**, no. 2, July 17, 1992.
- 28 Regenboogfractie evalueert EG-uitbreiding naar Oost-Europa, in: **De Standaard**, September 6, 1991.
- 29 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10962(2/1): "Final resolution by the participants of International Conference of European rural and centrist parties, including the Rainbow Group from the E.P."; **E.F.A.-Newsletter**, no. 3, October 19, 1992, p. 1.
- 30 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10962(2/1): List of Participants International Network Meeting of September 6-10 [1991] in Warsaw.
- 31 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10960(2/1): Minutes EFA meeting of May 4-5, 1992 in Brussels, p. 4.
- 32 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10960(2/1): Minutes EFA meeting of May 4-5, 1992 in Brussels, p. 5.
- 33 J. Vandemeulebroucke, En na de oorlog?, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 8, no. 4, December 1990-February 1991, p. 1.
- 34 F. Ingelaere, **Grondlijnen van de Europese Politieke, Economische en Monetaire Unie. Een verkenning van het Europese Unieverdrag**, Deurne, 1992, pp. 63-67; J-P JACQUE, R. BIEBER, M. HAAG et al, **Le Droit de la CE et de l'Union Européenne**, vol. 9: Le Parlement Européen, Le Conseil, La Commission, La Cour des Comptes, Le Comité Economique et Social, Le Comité des Régions, La Banque Européenne d'Investissement, Le Fonds Européen d'Investissement, Brussels, 2000, pp. 393-427.
- 35 F. Delmartino, **Profiel van [...]**, pp. 116-118.
- 36 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10961(1/1): Minutes EFA meeting of May 4-5, 1992 in Brussels, p. 8.
- 37 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10962(5/2): Minutes EFA meeting of October 18-19, 1993 in Cardiff.
- 38 F. Delmartino, **Profiel van [...]**, p. 117.
- 39 S. Borrás-Alomar, T. Christiansen & A. Rodríguez-Pose, Towards [...], p. 12.
- 40 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10966(4/1): "Institutional questions", Electoral platform Rainbow Group 1994.
- 41 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10961(1/1): Minutes EFA meeting of May 4-5, 1992 in Brussels, pp. 7-8; ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10959 (2/1): Het sociale Europa: veel geblaas en weinig wol, note by Jaak Vandemeulebroucke for the Rainbow Group meeting of June 4-5, 1991, p. 7.

- 42 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10961(1/1): Minutes EFA meeting of May 4-5, 1992 in Brussels, p. 7.
- 43 "A status for our language, an investment code to preserve our identity and our integrity; a dispensatory tax status to develop our economy; real legislative power and real scope of action for Corsica as a European region: the Maastricht Treaty offers none of that, not even as a perspective", ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10971(1/1): "L'UPC et Maastricht: ni oui, ni non", August 27, 1992.
- 44 Racisme en vreemdelingenhaat, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 8, August 1990, no. 2, p. 3.
- 45 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10965(3/1): Press release David Morris, November 5, 1990.
- 46 "[...] the nationalism and European federalism which we support does not [have] any connection with the narrow-mindedness and dangerous ultra-nationalism and egotism of the other side. [...] We oppose Dillen and Le Pen in the same way as openness opposes hatred", P.R., Het water is veel te diep, in: **Knack**, May 13, 1992, pp. 35-36.
- 47 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10960(2/1): Minutes EFA meeting of May 4-5, 1992 in Brussels, p. 8.
- 48 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10958(1/1): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of October 1, 1990 in San Sebastian, p. 3.
- 49 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10958(2/1): Minutes EFA meeting of March 11-12, 1991 in Strasbourg.
- 50 "It is not the message of 'migrants out' which the Lega is sending the world; it is the fight against central power, wild capitalism and the concentration of resources which the Lega is concerned about. [...] One and a half years of being active in the European Parliament have made it clear that the Lega is a democratic party which is regionalist and peace-loving. It is a party which also endorses and defends the social programme of the EFA", De Lombarden definitief bij de EVA, in: **Euronieuws**, vol. 9, May 1991, no. 1, p. 14.
- 51 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10962(5/2), Minutes EFA meeting of October 18-19, 1993 in Cardiff.
- 52 The extreme right party Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) was the direct heir to Mussolini's fascist party. In 1994 it officially distanced itself from its past and called itself "Alleanza Nazionale" (AN).
- 53 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10977(1/1): "Compte-rendu réunion du 28 février et 1er mars 1994" [Milan].
- 54 "that the Lega neither has, nor will have, any links with the MSI -Alleanza Nazionale and that it will continue the struggle to set up a real federalist regime in the Italian state. [...] I can only reaffirm what we said in Milan: the Lega will never sign an agreement with the MSI", ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10963(2/1): Luigi Moretti to Winifred Ewing, March 15, 1994.
- 55 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10963(2/1): Luigi Moretti to Winifred Ewing, March 15, 1994.
- 56 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10963(2/1): Winifred Ewing to Herman Verheirstraeten, April 7, 1994.
- 57 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10963(2/1): Minutes EFA meeting of April 11-12, 1994 in Brussels, pp. 1-8.
- 58 "It includes the political responsibilities that the Lega Nord wants to assume in order to reform political organisations in Italy with a view to more federalism. However the EFA cannot accept that one of its members, directly or indirectly, enter a government whose composition is of a totalitarian nature", ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10977(1/1): Unanimously adopted text of the General Assembly of April 11, 1994 in Brussels.
- 59 "Failing this, we require that you leave the group as you announced yourself in Milan", ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10977(1/1): Letter to Luigi Moretti and Francesco Speroni, April 20, 1994.
- 60 "On the one hand, I am the Secretary of a group which says that it will wait until it takes a decision. On the other, I am the Secretary of an EFA which has some members who get up on their high horse and want to take a decision immediately. This can only lead to misunderstandings. I cannot simply play around with ethics and, so to speak, serve two masters.", ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10963(2/1): Herman Verheirstraeten to Winnie Ewing, March 16, 1994.
- 61 ADVN, interview with Jill Evans by Mathieu Vanhaelewyn, Brussels, October 18, 2005.
- 62 "The European Free Alliance (EFA) [...] pronounces itself in favour of the election of Members of the European Parliament, from 1994 onwards, within the framework of regional political constituencies. The new voting system must respect two fundamental democratic principles: distribution of electoral constituencies must coincide with the cultural and human reality of the regions and not be the result of partisan considerations; each region, irrespective of its demographic weight, must be assured of being able to elect at least one MEP", ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10965(2/1): Press release M. Simeoni and G. Airol, "Les futurs députés européens devront être élus dans les régions", October 20, 1992.
- 63 **E.F.A.-Newsletter**, no. 4, August 1993, p. 1.

EFA in the fourth legislative period (1994-1999)

The European elections of 1994: “un automne difficile”

After having had a group in the European Parliament for five years in which regionalists constituted the main faction (the second Rainbow Group), the contrast could not be greater in 1994 as far as the EFA was concerned. There was no pot of gold at the end of the Rainbow. The election results were disappointing: the EFA only obtained three seats, one held by the VU (Jaak Vandemeulebroucke) and two held by the SNP (Winifred Ewing and Allan Macartney). After his sudden death on August 25, 1998, the latter was succeeded by fellow party member Ian Hudghton after a by-election was held in the North-East Scotland European constituency.¹ Vandemeulebroucke was succeeded in October 1998 by Nelly Maes. She made a memorable entrance with her comment about the agricultural contamination of water: “*Mijnheer de Voorzitter, ik kom uit een streek waar mo-*



In 1999 Plaid Cymru could, for the first time in its history, send people to the European Parliament. Jill Evans (here between SNP's Ian Hudghton and Winnie Ewing) joined the Group The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament together with Eurig Wyn.

Winifred M. EWING
(Glasgow, 1929)



The lawyer Winifred (Winnie) Ewing is Scotland's best known nationalist, having served in the Westminster, European and Scottish parliaments. She became active in campaigning for Scottish independence while at Glasgow University. Winnie famously won the Hamilton by-election for the SNP in 1967, and her presence at Westminster proved to be a real focus for Scotland and the SNP.

Despite her hard work, the Labour Party regained Hamilton in 1970, but Winnie managed to be re-elected to Westminster in 1974, where she remained until she became the MEP for the Scottish Highlands and Islands in 1979. Such was her impact in Europe that she soon earned the title "**Madame Ecosse**".

Ewing caused some confusion in the EFA when she chose the Gaullist Group after the European elections of 1979 and 1984 and thus prevented the formation of a possible group of regionalists and nationalists in the European Parliament. In 1989, Ewing became a member of the Rainbow Group. A short while later, she became the President of the EFA, of which she is an honorary member.

In 1999, she stood down from the European Parliament and became an Member of Parliament in the first session of the new Scottish Parliament, presiding over the first session with the words: "**The Scottish Parliament, adjourned on the 25th day of March in the year 1707, is hereby reconvened.**"

In 2003, Winnie retired from parliament and, in 2005, stood down from the SNP Presidency which she had held for many years. After her retirement as an elected politician, Winnie wrote her autobiography. She continues to be in popular demand as an energetic campaigner for SNP election candidates all over Scotland.

menteel geen enkele waterput nog drinkbaar water levert, uit Vlaanderen".² She was promptly congratulated by European Commissioner Neil Kinnock: "(...) *I wish to congratulate Mrs Maes on her maiden speech. This is her first day in this Parliament. She managed to speak within about two hours of becoming a Member. She managed to speak for three minutes when she was down for two minutes, so her constituents can be very satisfied at the fact that instead of one Member they have got one and half Members and that, I am sure, bodes well for the future.*"³

Neil Blaney from Ireland died on 8 November 1995 after a long illness. He had not taken part in the European elections the year before. In Italy, *Federalismo*, the joint list of candidates of UV and PSD'A, was swept away. "(...) *après dix années les communautés ethniques de l'Etat italien sont à nouveau dépourvues d'un propre représentant au sein du Parlement européen,*" read a summary of Pia Morise about "*un automne difficile*" for her party, Union Valdôtaine.⁴ "*Il faut, quand même, souligner que les communautés ethniques, coalisées depuis 1979 par l'Union Valdôtaine, après avoir tracé le chemin du message politique autonomiste et fédéraliste, ces années durant ont démontré leur incapacité de soutenir publiquement, déplacées par le message autonomiste-économique de la Lega Nord.*"⁵ With as many as six seats, Lega Nord went over to the Liberal Group. Mario Melis had to give up his seat in the same way as Max Simeoni had to in Corsica. And it was also the case that the joint list of candidates of the Basques and Catalans did not win any seats and nor did Bloque Nacionalista Galego or Partido Andalucista. Consequently, the formation of their own group, for which thirteen members were required, was not an option. Negotiation with others was all the more urgent, but, with only three elected members, the EFA was extremely weak.

In addition, the eurosceptic Danes, who had worked together well with the EFA MEPs since 1979, went over to the newly formed Group

of the Europe of the Nations, which had formed with a view to opposing the Treaty of Maastricht. This did not mean that there was a souring of relations with the Danes: joint actions or study days were still possible. Ultimately, the three EFA members of the

European Parliament opted to join forces with the thirteen elected members of *Energie Radicale*, which had been formed by the flamboyant French businessman Bernard Tapie, and the *Partito Radicale* from Italy, which had fallen out of favour in 1984 (cf. supra). Isidoro Sanchez García (*Coalición Canaria*), who was an observer in the EFA, was also part of this amalgam. Thus it was that the **European Radical Alliance (ERA)** came into existence – this was far from being an ideal solution, but at least everyone had something to which they could belong. The group, which had the lengthy name “*group of environmental activists, federalists, autonomists/regionalists, progressive liberals, feminists and radicals*”, was based on a charter which promoted a democratic, federal and social Europe.⁶ Apart from this, the members of the ERA were able to act in a relatively autonomous way.

Plaid Cymru had previously withdrawn from the EFA in 1994 as a result of the difficulties with *Lega Nord* (cf. supra), but they now let it be known that they wanted to reverse this decision, although not everyone was impressed with the impulsive way in which the Welsh party had acted. “*Whilst some members were happy to see the party return, they were concerned about the heavy-handed and unceremonious way things had been done. It would have been better and more logical if its members had first discussed and considered the matter amongst themselves before taking a decision.*”⁷

In 1995, the EFA regulations were changed again, and this time the changes were significant. This was the second stage in the transformation of the European Free Alliance into a fully-fledged European political party. Although Article 138a of the Treaty of Maastricht stated that political parties at European level were important ‘as a factor for integration within the Union’, the parties only existed in theory.⁸ EFA now also changed its name to the “**Democratic Party of the Peoples of Europe – European Free Alliance**” (DPPE-EFA). ERC motivated the addition of the acronym DPPE as follows: “*Los grandes partidos europeos tienen el título de partido: Partido de los Socialistas Europeos, Partido Popular Europea, etc. los cuales están formados como federación de partidos pero esto no es impedimento para utilizar el título como si se tratara de un partido único. El concepto “Alianza” es ambiguo y no define con suficiente claridad la naturaleza de nuestra unión. Dado que el nombre de ALE es ya histórico, proponemos mantenerlo dentro del nombre de la organización, aunque en segundo lugar. Proponemos la palabra “Democrático” para buscar algún adjetivo que nos pueda unificar y darnos una señal de identidad al estido de “socialista”, “popular”, “liberal”, etc. Es una palabra que en otros ámbitos se utiliza mucho no siendo así en Europa. Finalmente la expresión “de los pueblos de Europa” se refiere a nuestra naturaleza de partidos que reivindicamos el ejercicio de los derechos de nuestras respectivas naciones y nos ahorra de utilizar términos que no*



Ana FRAZAO
(Leopoldville, 1949)

Ana Frazao entered the European Parliament at the beginning of 1986 and worked for about ten years in the secretariat for unregistered members of the European Parliament. In 1994, when the

European Radical Alliance (ERA) group was formed, she became acquainted with the elected members of the European Free Alliance. From 1994 to 1999, she assumed responsibility for the central secretariat for all Members of the European Parliament in the group, and the Members of the European Parliament in the EFA entrusted her with the secretariat for the political body of the EFA under the auspices of the new Green/EFA parliamentary group. She fulfilled this role until the start of her pre-pension period at the end of 2004. Ana Frazao is an honorary member of the EFA.

Christian GYONVARC'H (1964)



Christian Guyonvarc'h obtained his BA in History in Nantes in 1984. Afterwards, he completed a doctorate in Brest and then the CAPES (Aptitude Certificate for teaching in secondary schools). In 1982 in Nantes he co-founded the **Comité de solidarité avec les peuples d'Afrique du Sud et de Namibie (CSPAN) (Committee for solidarity with the peoples of South-Africa and Namibia)** and was an opponent of the apartheid regime in these countries. In November 1983, he joined the Union démocratique bretonne (UDB), of which he is now the President.

From 1984 to 1987, he taught courses and completed his national service as a conscientious objector. From 1989 to 1994, he was employed as the Administrator of the Rainbow Group in the European Parliament, where he was the parliamentary colleague of Max Simeoni. In 1994, he became the spokesperson for the UDB. He is also the General Secretary of the **Fédération Régions & Peuples Solidaires (R&PS)**, the umbrella organisation of the French autonomist parties. He is also the Deputy Mayor of Lorient.

Guyonvarc'h has written a number of books, including **Quelle place pour la Bretagne dans le marché unique européen?** (1988) (**Brittany's place in a single European market?**) and **Une Bretagne responsable dans un monde solidaire** (1995, together with Yann Fievet) (**A responsible Brittany in a solidary world**).

*todo el mundo entiende de la misma manera como nacionalista, regionalista, federalista, etc.*⁹ The amended regulations, including the new name, were adopted in the General Assembly which was held in Brussels in October 1995.¹⁰

Ewing was elected President in November 1997. She undertook to lend her support to the public events of the member parties as much as possible.¹¹ A new Bureau was elected in June 1998: Jill Evans, Begoña Lasagabaster, Etienne Andrione, Roelof Falkena and Gustave Alirol were appointed in the General Assembly. Ewing was the President and Alan Macartney was the Co-ordinator. As a member of the European Parliament, Jaak Vandemeulebroucke had a seat.¹²

Towards new (re)sources for EFA: FORUM 1997

The elections were disastrous for the EFA, but this did not mean that there was absolutely no activity. There was a period of internal change. As always, the spearhead remained “*the development of a Europe of the nations and regions based on mutual solidarity*”, but it soon became clear that things had to change. Financially, there was an amount left over from the previous Rainbow Group which was able to be used for the activities of the EFA during this legislative period.¹³ However, in the middle of 1995, a problem with the releasing of the “*outstanding balance of the former Rainbow Group*” made it necessary for the Bureau to adopt the system of financial contributions which had already been considered in 1991, but which had never

been implemented.¹⁴ The three Euro MPs Ewing, Macartney and Vandemeulebroucke transferred £3,000 each for EFA activities every year.¹⁵ The financial resources were at any rate a matter of decisive importance for the activities of the EFA. It was for this reason as well that the presence of Euro MPs was of such great importance.

The unsuccessful elections obviously had an effect on the activities of the EFA: “*the situation since 1994 has dramatically change(d), in the sense that EFA only has three members in the European Parliament and we are only two members of the staff to work for EFA outside our working hours,*” according to the new Secretary, José Luis Linazasoro.¹⁶ The period immediately after the elections (1994-1995) was all in all a calm period, as every effort

was directed towards the formation of a group.¹⁷ However, from 1996, the activities of the EFA were given a fresh impetus. It enjoyed a new lease of life during the preparations for the next European elections and the formation of a possible group in the European Parliament. All kinds of possibilities were opened up; even Lega Nord was (briefly) allowed to participate again.

Within the European Radical Alliance, the EFA had a certain autonomy, which enabled it to maintain contacts beyond the boundaries of the group: *“It was certainly necessary to broaden its base to include people such as John Hume and members of the CDC, PNV, SNP and Fianna Fail. Contact should also be maintained with the Danes in the EDN Group, who have taken a very great interest in institutional matters and were, for example, planning an alternative Summit and a parallel conference.”*¹⁸ In this context, an initial meeting of FORUM 1997 was organized in June 1997 with a view to talking with *“all those who believe in the building of a decentralised Europe, respectful of its cultural and linguistic diversity and in harmony with the precepts of basic democracy.”*¹⁹ Thoughts about the topic of “unity



Begoña LASAGABASTER
(Irún-Gipuzkoa, 1962)

Begoña Lasagabaster joined the EFA in 1987. **“It had been just over a year since Spain and Portugal, two very different nations, joined the EU,”** she recalls. **“Their accession was long**

overdue, as it had been delayed because of the dictatorship, which smothered democracy and persecuted the Basque, Catalan and Galician nations and languages and all citizens who refused to live by the rules. It was also the time when I first came into contact with the EFA Parliamentary Group. It proved to be a decisive moment.”

Carlos Garaikoetxea, the first post-dictatorship lehendakari – the Prime Minister of the Basque Government – had been elected a Member of the European Parliament and had to find his way into a Parliamentary Group. **“We in Eusko Alkartasuna had no doubt whatsoever: the EFA-Green Group was our home. It was crystal clear that our approaches were the same, not only in our defence of our stateless nations, but also in**

our defence of liberties, sustainable development, progress, openness towards the world, support for other nations and so many other things...,” says Begoña, adding that **“from that moment, with just a typewriter in our office, we set off on our journey”**.

According to Begoña, that approach still exists today. **“Throughout the years, we have always defended the various parties which together constitute the EFA, we have always welcomed those who were not welcome elsewhere, like the Iraqi Kurds, who denounced the use of chemical weapons by Saddam Hussein in 1988, Rugova and so many other persons.”**

Looking back on her experience with EFA, Begoña Lasagabaster says: **“Today, almost 20 years later, I still have the same dream for Eusko Alkartasuna and the EFA. After EFA’s birth, we have become a European political party, and although we have already achieved a lot, there is still much that needs to be done. It is our duty and it is a challenge for the very, very long term, in which patience, hard work, dialogue, hope, respect for others and happiness have always been and still are our only and our best tools.**

Like we said on the very first day: “AUR-RERA”. March onwards! Let’s go to work!”

José Luis LINAZASORO
(Irún, 1963)



José Luis Linazasoro was predestined for the European adventure. His parents come from both sides of the Basque border and he was first educated in an “*ikastola*” (school providing tuition in the Basque language) in the south and was then educated at the Universities of Bordeaux and Strasbourg in France.

In 1986, he came to Brussels in order to become a **stagiaire** with the European Commission. The following year, he began his career in the European Parliament as an assistant of Carlos Garaikoetxea. He was a member of the team of the European Free Alliance (EFA) in the Rainbow Group between 1987 and 1994.

In 1994, José Luis Linazasoro succeeded Herman Verheirstraeten as the General Secretary of the EFA. Under his direction, the EFA underwent reorganisation in order to meet the new requirements of the European structure (the recognition of the role of the European political parties as a result of the Treaty of Maastricht, the organisation of co-ordinated European election campaigns, and the legal recognition and European public financing of European political parties in 2004).

José Luis Linazasoro is currently acting as the Parliamentary Co-ordinator of the EFA in the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament.

in diversity” were exchanged there.²⁰ However, the presence of Lega Nord (cf. infra) did not please everyone, as is apparent from a letter from Eurig Wyn: “(...) *Plaid Cymru have (...) asked me to dissociate myself from EFA if Lega are on board.*”²¹

Towards an expansion of the EFA: “pas l’élargissement pour l’élargissement”

Possible partners for the Group were sought for the next legislative period. All kinds of tentative talks took place. Ultimately, Lega Nord was also consulted as well as the centre parties, the Danes from Junibeveaegelsen and Folkebeveaegelsen, Fianna Fail and the Greens.²²

In Catalonia, the Partido per l’Independencia (PI) separated from the ERC in 1996 over a personal matter.²³ However, the EFA continued to regard ERC as its Catalan partner. There was also contact with the Macedonian party Vinozito (Rainbow Party) from Greece and parties that had left Lega Nord, for example Liga Veneta, Libertà Emiliana and Libertà Lombarda.²⁴ At the beginning of 1996, the Lega indicated that it wanted to join the EFA. This again led to division within the group. For the Sardinian Mario Carboni (PSd’A), the formation of a group was of paramount importance: “*If necessary, he was prepared to enter into a pact with the devil to set up a group. (...) Why not start talks with the LN? They were an important*

force for political change and for destroying the dead hand of Italian centralism. Cooperation was essential.”²⁵ Allan Macartney (SNP) wanted to wait until after the elections in Great Britain: “*If the LN joined, the SNP would have to rethink its position: either leave the EFA or downgrade its status to that of observer.*”²⁶ The Bretons of the UDB threatened to leave the EFA if the Lega joined: “*Nous ne pouvons accueillir la Ligue uniquement en raison de son action contre l’Etat central et de ses succès électoraux. Un tel raisonnement pourrait être appliqué au Vlaams Blok ou au PNV. Ce n’est pas possible,*” was the view of Kristian Guyonvarc’h.²⁷ Herman Verheirstraeten argued the case for membership with a view to the formation of a group in 1999: “*At all costs we should avoid ending up in the same position as after the elections in 1994. This was the time to lay the groundwork for a Group in 1999 and establish alliances with all forces opposed to a bureaucratic and centralist Europe. This would without doubt mean looking to people who were opposed to Maastricht, and to the Greens. Without a strategy and*

*without political action the EFA would simply be a talking shop, which would be a waste of time and money.*²⁸ Begoña Lasagabaster (EA) thought that the Lega could have contact with the EFA with regard to content and in an informal way, as was the case with the Basque PNV and the Catalan CDC, but was of the view that membership was a different matter: “*Elle ne souhaite pas l’élargissement pour l’élargissement.*”²⁹

However, Lega Nord assured “*qu’elle respecte dans le cadre institutionnel en général, et plus particulièrement dans le cadre de la Padania, les droits des minorités nationales et européennes. Il ne peut pas avoir de doute au respect du statut actuel d’autonomie de la région du Valle d’Aosta, de Friuli, du Sud Tirool ou de toute autre minorité existente. Il va de soi que la Lega Nord comme parti fédéraliste démocratique, considère comme élément de base de sa philosophie politique, le droit à tous les peuples à l’auto-détermination.*”³⁰ However, the Lega did not live up to its promises. At the General Assembly of April 1997, questions were raised about the conduct of the party. According to Carboni (PSd’A), the EFA should do everything it could to put Lega Nord back on the right track, because ‘Lega Nord held a key position in Italy’.³¹ EFA President Jaak Vandemeulebroucke was ordered to make it clear to the Lega that the EFA partners did not wish to cooperate with xenophobe parties or movements.

Ultimately, in April 1999, five years after Lega Nord was excluded from the EFA, the DPPE-EFA distanced itself openly.³² With elections just around the corner and in view of the negative feelings surrounding the Lega, this was not an unwise decision. Euro MP Nelly Maes gave the reasons for this in an unambiguous open letter which she wrote to Umberto Bossi, the leader of Lega Nord: “*(...) the increasingly aggressive manner in which you stir up the local population against migrants, the openly racist pamphlets circulated by your party, your links with highly dubious associates such as Zhirinovski, your expressions of sympathy with the criminal regime in Iraq and with Milosevic’s Serbia, your unrestrained assertions about American policy towards Europe and recently your cooperation with Rauti’s former MSI (from which even Gianfranco Fini has distanced himself) and even with Forza Nuova, an obscure, pure nazi association, are too much. You will also be aware that Le Pen’s Front National supports your initiative for a referendum on the Napoletano-Turco law on immigrants. (...) So be it. A chapter has now been closed. The Vlaams Blok and Le Pen will welcome you with open arms.*”³³



Allan MACARTNEY
(Ghana, 1941 – 1998)

Allan Macartney was born the son of a Church of Scotland minister in Ghana in 1941. He went on to study at Elgin Secondary School in Scotland, then at the Universities of Tübingen and Marburg

in Germany, and after that at the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. He joined the SNP in 1960 while at Edinburgh, where he became the Founder President of the SNP student wing.

After graduating, he returned to Africa to work as a voluntary teacher in a secondary school and, as a lecturer in government and administration, he taught at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. After his return to Scotland in the mid-1970s, Allan had a distinguished academic career which culminated in his election as Rector of Aberdeen University. He was also an Open University tutor.

In tandem with this, his SNP career grew. He contested a host of elections, became SNP Deputy Leader in 1992, and was variously SNP Vice-President, Vice-Convener for Organisation, and Convener of Political Education. He also founded, and was Provost of, the Scottish Self-Government College.

Allan was elected as MEP for Northeast Scotland in June 1994, serving on the Fisheries and Development Committees of the European Parliament, where he and his wife, Anne, were tireless campaigners for Scotland and enthusiastic members of the EFA until Allan’s sudden death in August 1998.

Nelly MAES
(Sinaai, 1941)



The Flemish teacher Nelly Maes was active in the youth movement, cultural work, the Flemish movement and the women's movement. In 1967, she began her political career with the Volksunie under the auspices of Maurits Coppieters. The following year, she became the national President of the **Volksunie-Jongeren (VUJO)**. She was a member of the Town Council of St-Niklaas from 1970 to 2001. From 1989 to 1996, she was also an alderman in St-Niklaas. At the parliamentary elections in 1971, Maurits Coppieters gave up his seat to make way for his first successor, Maes. She kept her seat until 1978 and returned from 1985 to 1991 as a representative of the people. From 1981 to 1985, Nelly Maes was co-opted as a Member of the Senate and, from 1991 to 1995, as a Member of the Provincial Senate for East Flanders. In 1995, she was elected as a Member of the Flemish Parliament. A year later, she became the Vice-President of the VU. As well as innovative opinions with regard to culture and education, Nelly Maes also took progressive views with regard to e.g. abortion, apartheid in South Africa and the arms trade. She was given the nickname "**Red Nelly**" in those circles in which her views were considered to be "too left-wing". The problems of the Third World also lay close to Nelly Maes' heart. In 1998, Nelly Maes succeeded Jaak Vandemeulebroucke as the Member of the European Parliament for the VU. She immediately made a name for herself in the Cresson Affair. In 1999, she was re-elected and became the Vice-President of the EFA/Greens Group. Together with Bart Staes, she was the representative of the EFA and later Spirit in this Group in the European Parliament. In 2004, she was not re-elected, but became the President of the EFA, which was established as a European political party in that year. Since the end of 2004, Nelly Maes has been the President of the **Vlaams Vredesinstituut** (Flemish Peace Institute), which was formed by the Flemish Parliament.

In the group

Although it had only three elected members, the EFA was nevertheless active in the European Parliament. In June 1998, Jaak Vandemeulebroucke asked the Council a question about the legal action which was being brought against four leaders of Vinozito, a Macedonian party in Greece. In 1995, the four of them had hung up a bilingual sign with the name of their party and had been treated harshly by the Greek authorities. Vandemeulebroucke complained that this was a violation of human rights and freedom of expression and called for action to be taken. The answer of the Council must have sounded familiar to the VU member of the European Parliament: "*It is not for the Council to comment on a matter which is the responsibility of the internal legal system of the Member State concerned.*"³⁴ In particular, it was on many occasions that Vandemeulebroucke asked the Council for an explanation of the use of languages in the European Union. Thus, he asked many (written) questions about the use of Dutch by the European institutions.³⁵

When the French *Conseil d'Etat* delivered an unfavourable verdict on the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, EFA members responded vehemently. Vandemeulebroucke stated in the Parliament that linguistic diversity is a part of the European Union's rich heritage, and that the right for communities to express themselves in their own culture is a fundamental right: "*Only when diversity is treated decently shall we be able to make progress towards a strong and genuine European Union.*"³⁶ Obviously, the regionalist parties of France also had a say. Christian Guyonvarc'h of UDB was also the Secretary of Régions & Peuples Solidaires, a federation of eleven regionalist parties in France.³⁷ In this capacity, his name also appeared on a statement which rejected the recommendations of the *Conseil d'Etat*: "*Pourquoi ce qui est devenu possible au Royaume uni, en Italie ou en Espagne, après la mort de Franco, ne le serait-il pas en France? Au nom de quel principe démocratique peut-on refuser à un Breton de*

s'exprimer en breton devant une assemblée locale bretonne, à un Occitan de s'exprimer en occitan dans un bureau de poste occitan ou à un Martiniquais de s'exprimer en créole devant un tribunal des Antilles?"³⁸ In an open letter to the French President, Jacques Chirac, Guyonvarc'h warned of the consequences of his decision: "*En discriminant les langues de la République autres que le français, en métropole comme dans les départements et territoires d'outre mer, en marginalisant les cultures autres que la culture classique des académies des belles lettres et des livres d'école, l'Etat français offre à l'extrême droite, toujours prête à toutes les récupérations, l'opportunité de dévoyer ces identités en leur ôtant toute dimension culturelle pour les réduire au rang de vulgaires folklores.*"³⁹

Vandemeulebroucke's successor, Nelly Maes, arrived nine months before the next elections of the European Parliament. Consequently, she did not have much time, but she nevertheless played an important role in the unmasking of the matter concerning European Commissioner Cresson and other fraudulent abuses in the European Parliament. She had discovered them in her capacity as a (new) member of the Budgetary Control Committee with the help of Dutch "whistle-blower" Paul Van Buitenen.⁴⁰ Ultimately, this scandal led to the resignation of the Santer Commission – the first time that the European Commission had resigned. Maes had made a name for herself.

Towards the European elections of 1999

There was a great demand for the post-electoral formation of a group in the European Parliament which was centered around an EFA nucleus and which would defend nationalism and a Europe of the peoples, "*at a time during which exclusive and xenophobic nationalism is the order of the day (...)*" according to Nelly Maes.⁴¹ People were hopeful: the Scots, Welsh and Flemish all hoped to win one or more seats. The various nationalists from the Spanish state also thought that they could be successful and formed cartels in the run-up to the elections. On the one hand, there was the "*Coalición Nacionalista Europa de los Pueblos*", to which PNV, EA, ERC and Unió Mallorquina belonged. On the other hand, there was the "*Coalición Europa*" with Coalición Canaria, PA, Union Valenciana and Partido Aragonés (PAR). In these electoral arrangements, agreements were reached about who would share the authority. BNG ran alone.

Plaid Cymru and SNP were optimistic, as the European elections would for the first time be held according to the system of proportional representation (instead of the so called winner takes it all system), which could yield one to two seats for Plaid Cymru and perhaps three for SNP.⁴² "*Mae Plaid Cymru yn hyderus y bydd yn llwyddo yn etholiadau Ewropeaidd 1999 ac y bydd yn cymryd el seddau cyntaf gyda'n partneriaid yn y Senedd Ewropeaidd er mwyn parhau â gwaith y blaid fel, gwir lais Cymru yn Ewrop.*"⁴³ Union Valdôtaine formed a cartel with the new party of Romano Prodi (Democratici di Sinistra) and was hoping for one seat.⁴⁴ For the first time, Vinezito also appeared at the European elections.⁴⁵ Nelly Maes had in nine months made a name for herself as a result of her role in the Cresson affair. Would she be elected?

However, realism was required: "*(...) it seemed fairly certain that the existing member parties of the DPPE would not be able, on their own, to form a group. They would therefore have to negotiate with other MEPs. They could form a DPPE sub-group within a larger whole.*" An independent EFA group was not really feasible, particularly as the number of members required was 14 if the group consisted of members from 4 or more different member

states, 18 if they came from 3 different member states, 23 if they came from two member states and 29 if they came from the same member state.⁴⁶

Conclusion 1994-1999

These five years represented the lowest point in the history of the European Free Alliance up until that time. In the European Parliament, the number of seats fell dramatically to three. In addition, two strong figures were lost: Neil Blaney (Independent Fianna Fail) passed away in 1995 and Allan Macartney (SNP) died in 1998.

However, an attempt was made to give a fresh impetus to the EFA. In the European Parliament, the programme of the EFA was brought to the fore as much as possible. And, as far as the EFA itself was concerned, it tried to prepare itself for the coming elections by attracting more partners. This process was not without its problems, as the issue of Lega Nord shows.

NOTES

- 1 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10971(1/1): Minutes DPPE-EFA General Assembly of December 10-11, 1998 in Brussels; International career devoted to Scotland, in: **The Herald**, August 26, 1998; <http://www.hudghtonmep.com>; <http://www.europarl.eu.int>.
- 2 "Mr. President, I come from a region, Flanders, where there is not a single well yielding water that you can drink", European Parliament, Debates, October 19, 1998.
- 3 European Parliament, Debates, October 19, 1998.
- 4 "[...] after ten years, the ethnic communities of the Italian state are once again destitute of a representative in the European Parliament", ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10969(3/1): [P. Morise], "Des élections européennes aux réformes institutionnelles", November 24, 1994.
- 5 "It still must be emphasised that ethnic communities – united in a coalition since 1979 by the Union Valdôtaine, after having opened the way for an autonomist, federalist political message – have shown their inability to support it publicly throughout the years, the economic-autonomist message of the Lega Nord having made them shift their emphasis", ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10969(3/1): [P. Morise], "Des élections européennes aux réformes institutionnelles", November 24, 1994.
- 6 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10969(1/1): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of September 19-20, 1994 in Brussels; J. Bosman, **De Europese Vrije Alliantie [...]**, p. 95.
- 7 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10969(1/1): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of September 19-20, 1994 in Brussels.
- 8 D.-L. Seiler, **Le parti démocratique des peuples d'Europe (PDPE-ALE)**, in: P. Delwit, E. Kùlahci & C. Van De Walle (eds.), **Les fédérations [...]**, p. 158.
- 9 "The major European parties have names such as Party of European Socialists, European People's Party, etc. They are constituted as federations of parties but this does not prevent them from using the title as if they were a single party. The term 'alliance' is ambiguous and does not describe the nature of our union sufficiently clearly. Since the name EFA already has a history, we propose to preserve it as part of the name of the organization, albeit in second place. We propose the word 'democratic' as an adjective which might unify us and give us a distinctive identity similar to 'socialist', 'people's', 'liberal', etc. This is a word which is used a great deal elsewhere, although not so much in Europe. Lastly, the phrase 'of the Peoples of Europe' refers to our vocation as parties which are demanding rights for our respective nations and saves us using terms which not everybody understands in the same way, such as nationalist, regionalist, federalist, etc.", ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10969(4/1): "Proyecto de nuevos estatutos de la Alianza Libre Europea. Enmiendas de Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya al documento recibido el mes de agosto de 1995".

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- 10 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10969(2/1): J.L. Linazasoro , “Nota sobre el Partido Democrático de los Pueblos de Europa – Alianza Libre Europea (PDPE-ALE)”, November 5, 1996.
- 11 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10969(2/1): José Luis Linazasoro to the members of the EFA Bureau, November 23, 1997.
- 12 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10971(2/1): Minutes DPPE-EFA General Assembly of June 12, 1998 in Cardiff.
- 13 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10969(1/1): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of September 19-20, 1994 in Brussels; ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10969(1/1): Jaak Vandemeulebroucke to the EFA members, June 19, 1995.
- 14 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10969(1/1): Jaak Vandemeulebroucke to the EFA members, July 25, 1995.
- 15 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10969(4/1): Agreement Winnie Ewing, Jaak Vandemeulebroucke and Allan Macartney, July 19, 1995.
- 16 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10971(1/1): José Luis Linazasoro to Roelof Falkena, October 15, 1997.
- 17 The fact that 1995 in particular represented a hiatus in the working of the EFA is reflected by the absence of archives of that period. This was confirmed by José Luis Linazasoro, Own collection of documents, written testimony of Günther Dauwen to Mathieu Vanhaelewyn, November 24, 2005.
- 18 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10969(1/1): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of September 19-20, 1994.
- 19 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10970(1/1): Letter from Allan Macartney, February 24, 1998.
- 20 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10971(1/1): José Luis Linazasoro to the EFA members, October 12, 1997; ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, VEA 6(1997), Minutes DPPE-EFA Bureau meeting of April 4, 1997 in Brussels.
- 21 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10971(1/1): Eurig Wyn to José Luis Linazasoro, October 19, [1997].
- 22 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10971(2/1): Minutes DPPE-EFA General Assembly of June 12, 1998 in Cardiff.
- 23 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10969(1/1): Minutes EFA-DPPE Bureau meeting of October 14, 1996 in Brussels.
- 24 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10971(3/1): Press release DPPE-EFA, [presumably April 9, 1999].
- 25 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10971(2/1): Minutes DPPE-EFA General Assembly of June 12, 1998 in Cardiff.
- 26 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10969(1/1): Minutes DPPE-EFA Bureau meeting of October 14, 1996 in Brussels.
- 27 “We cannot welcome the Lega solely by virtue of its action against the central state and on the grounds of its electoral success. That sort of reasoning could be applied to the Vlaams Blok or to the PNV. It is not possible”, “Compte rendu de l’assemblée générale Alliance Libre Européenne – Parti démocratique des peuples d’Europe, Barcelone, le 8 novembre 1996”.
- 28 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10969(1/1): Minutes DPPE-EFA Bureau meeting of October 14, 1996 in Brussels.
- 29 “She does not want enlargement for the sake of enlargement”, “Compte rendu de l’assemblée générale Alliance Libre Européenne – Parti démocratique des peuples d’Europe, Barcelone, le 8 novembre 1996”.
- 30 “[...] that it respects the rights of national and European minorities within the institutional framework in general and especially within the framework of Padania. There can be no doubt about their respect for the current status of autonomy in relation to regions such as the Aosta Valley, Friuli, Südtirol or any other existing minority. It goes without saying that a fundamental element of the Lega Nord’s political philosophy, as a democratic, federalist party, is to recognise the right of every people to self-determination”, ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10977(2/1): Roberto Maroni to Jaak Vandemeulebroucke, September 2, 1996.
- 31 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, VEA6(1997), Minutes DPPE-EFA Bureau meeting of April 4, 1997 in Brussels.
- 32 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10971(3/1): Press release DPPE-EFA, April 9, 1999.
- 33 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10977(2/1): Open letter Nelly Maes to Umberto Bossi, [presumably April 1999].
- 34 European Parliament, Questions, October 22, 1998 E-1998/98.
- 35 See for instance: European Parliament, Questions, E-0017/98, E-1897/96, E-3157/95, E-2926/95, E-2925/95, E-2851/94.
- 36 European Parliament, Debates, April 8, 1997.
- 37 At that moment the following parties belonged to the federation Régions & Peuples Solidaires: Union du Peuple Alsacien (UPA), Eusko Alkartasuna (EA), Union Démocratique Bretonne (UDB), Frankiz-Breizh (Liberté Bretagne), Partit per Catalunya, Union du Peuple Corse, Parti Occitan, Région-Provence, Rassemblement du peuple franc-comtois (RPF), Mouvement Région Savoie, Parti fédéraliste de Flandre-Artois.

- 38 "Why should something that became possible in the United Kingdom, in Italy or in Spain – after Franco's death – not be possible in France? In the name of what democratic principle should one deny a Breton the right to speak Breton before a local Breton assembly, or an Occitan to speak Occitan in an Occitan post office, or a native of Martinique to speak Creole in a West Indian court?", ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10967(4/1): "Après l'avis négatif du Conseil d'Etat sur l'utilisation des langues régionales dans la vie publique, deux solutions: amender la Constitution... ou quitter la France", February 7, 1997.
- 39 "By discriminating against the languages of the Republic other than French – in mainland France and in the overseas departments and territories – by marginalising cultures other than the classical culture of great literature as taught by the academies and in schoolbooks, the French state gives the far right – continually on the lookout for all sorts of recuperation – the opportunity to sidetrack these identities by taking away any cultural dimension they have, in order to reduce them to the level of vulgar folklore", ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10967(4/1): Open letter from Christian Guyonvarc'h (Régions & Peuples Solidaires) to Jacques Chirac and Lionel Jospin, October 7, 1997.
- 40 ADVN, interview with Nelly Maes by Mathieu Vanhaelewyn, Sinaai, December 13, 2005.
- 41 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10971(3/1): Minutes DPPE-EFA General Meeting of April 8-9, 1999 in Brussels.
- 42 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, VEA6(1998): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of February 9, 1998; ADVN, BE ADVN, AC652, EFA Fonds, D10971(1/1): Minutes DPPE-EFA General Assembly of December 10-11, 1998 in Brussels.
- 43 "Plaid Cymru is looking forward to success in the European elections in 1999 and taking its first seats with our partners in the European Parliament to carry on the party's work as the real voice of Wales in Europe", "Cymru yn Ewrop", Electoral material, 1999.
- 44 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, VEA6(1998): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of February 9, 1998 in Brussels.
- 45 G. Nakratzas, **Political activity of Rainbow (the political party of the ethnic Macedonians). Political activity of the ethnic Turks. An anthology of interviews, letters, and articles**, Thessaloniki, 2000, pp. 53-54.
- 46 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, D10971(2/1): Minutes DPPE-EFA General Assembly of June 12, 1998 in Cardiff.

EFA in the fifth legislative period (1999-2004)

The June 1999 European Elections: Partnership with the Greens

Twenty years after the first direct European elections, the EFA had 9 MEPs: Ian Hudghton, who had been a Euro MP for the SNP since 1998, was now joined by fellow party member Neil MacCormick. Thanks to the proportional system, Plaid Cymru got to send its first ever representatives to Strasbourg: Jillian (Jill) Evans and Eurig Wyn. The VU also



In 1999 the EFA MEPs formed a Group in the European Parliament with the European Greens. From the beginning, the EFA had environmental issues in its program. This picture was taken during a symbolical action of the Group concerning climate change and the Greenhouse effect. Neil MacCormick, Nelly Maes, Camilo Nogueira and Bart Staes are on the picture for the EFA.

supplied two MEPs: as Bert Anciaux's successor, Bart Staes – who had worked for Jaak Vandemeulebroucke, Willy Kuijpers and Nelly Maes since 1983 – formed a remarkable team with Maes. Finally, there were also three Euro MPs from Spain: Carlos Bautista Ojeda (PA), Camilo Nogueira Román (BNG) and Gorka Knörr Borràs (EA). The latter vacated his seat in the European Parliament upon his election to the Basque Parliament in May 2001. In accordance with the terms of the electoral agreement (cf. supra), he was replaced by Miquel Mayol i Raynal, giving the ERC its first representative in the European Parliament in seven years.¹ In 2003, Bautista joined the Autonomous Government of Andalusia and left the European Parliament in July. His seat was taken by Juan Manuel Ferrández Lezaun (PAR), who was not a member of the EFA. Josu Ortuondo Larrea also sat in the group for the PNV. His party had been a member of the EPP group (cf. supra), but in November of 1999 the party became an observing member of the EFA.²

After the 1994-1999 legislature the EFA prospered again and there was a lot of optimism and enthusiasm. Apart from the two annual General Assemblies (one of which is always held in Brussels), the decision was made to organise a summit of the EFA parties in



Carlos BAUTISTA OJEDA
(Linares, 1959)

The Andalusian Carlos Bautista Ojeda is a sports doctor by profession. He engages in motocross and paragliding and has also taken part in competitions. He has also championed the cause of

sport in local and European politics.

In 1999, he was at the top of the list of candidates of Partido Andalucista (PA) and was elected as a Member of the European Parliament. There he was a member of the Agriculture Committee and the Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism. He was also a member of the "Delegation for relations with the Maghreb countries and the Arab Maghreb Union". As a Member of the European Parliament acting within the framework of the EFA, he called upon the Spanish presidency (January-June 2002) to take account of the autonomous regions. **"The 'old' and criticized Europe, its peoples and its representatives gave me a unique opportunity to enrich myself. (...) Those roots are being kept alive for future generations by the different peoples who make up the European Union. That diversity**

is our strength. The European Free Alliance is the political germ that will sustain a diverse Europe. The EFA is a body which acts as the direct representative of our peoples and their historical, cultural and political wealth," he says with regard to this. Looking back at his time as a Member of the European Parliament, Bautista says: **"I will never be able to express my full gratitude for the warm welcome which I received in the EFA and the fact that many of my opinions were regarded as forming an integral part of the organization and the parliamentary group. On the other hand, I will never be able to thank you enough for the way in which your receptiveness made me more open-minded and more receptive to ideas which were different to my own. This is our strength in this globalised world which is led by powers which are trying to destroy what we represent. For this reason, our commitment and efforts to promote diversity in the EU and the world must be renewed every day."**

In 2003, the place of Carlos Bautista in the European Parliament was filled by Juan Manuel Ferrández, who was not a member of the EFA. Bautista was then elected as a member of the Andalusian government. He is an honorary member of the EFA.

2000 and more attention was paid to communication through the *EFA News* newsletter and the website. Nelly Maes was appointed as president – a position which, in accordance with the statutes, had to be held by a Member of the European Parliament. The composition of the new Bureau also betrayed a certain measure of renewal within the EFA: Gorka Knörr (vice-president), Gustave Alirol, Franco Piretta, Jill Evans, Jaak Vandemeulebroucke (treasurer) and Roelof Falkena.³

For the first time since 1989, when the European Greens formed their own group (cf. supra), the Greens on the one hand and the regionalists and nationalists on the other hand decided to join forces in the European Parliament. The nine EFA MEPs increased the weight of the Greens in the European Parliament. Furthermore, the points of agreement between the two apparently outweighed the Greens' initial scepticism with regard to the nationalism of the EFA parties. *“Though coming from different backgrounds we have often come to the same conclusions in the European Parliament in the past. Therefore it was logical to join our forces now,”* according to Nelly Maes.⁴ Still, the Greens were not united in their decision to collaborate with the EFA MEP's.⁵ Eventually an agreement was reached which constituted the basis for **“The Greens/ European Free Alliance”**. With its 47 members this was then the fourth largest group in the EP.⁶ Incidentally, this was the first time the name European Free Alliance was used as such in the European Parliament.

The “Protocol of Understanding between Members of the Green Group in the European Parliament and Members of the European Free Alliance” stated that *“this Group is the expression of the political will of two separate and progressive European political families to co-operate in order to strengthen their mutual political interests in the European Parliament. The visibility of the component partners will be guaranteed”*.⁷ Nevertheless, the group presidency rested with the Greens, who honoured their tradition of dual chairmanship by appointing a man and a woman as co-chairpersons.⁸ As president of the EFA subgroup, Nelly Maes was named first vice-chairwoman, allowing her to represent the entire group in the European Parliament's Conference of Presidents with regard to issues of particular importance to the EFA members and giving



Günther DAUWEN
(Deurne, 1969)

As the son of the VU alderman and town council member Jef Dauwen and as the grandson of two grandfathers who supported the Flemish movement, he grew up with politics. As a conscientious

objector and a graduate with a bachelor's degree in Political and Social Sciences with a special emphasis on International politics and a postgraduate qualification in Human Ecology, Günther Dauwen is driven by a desire for peace, interculturalism and the concept of humans in a durable context. During his civilian service, he thus worked with underprivileged young people and co-ordinated an exhibition about the rich Arabic heritage which is to be found in Western culture. He wrote a book called **“Van Algebra tot Pyjama”** (From Algebra to Pyjamas) about it. In the Elcker-Ik Mechelen Adult Education Centre, Dauwen ran a course for adults which was concerned with current affairs and political topics as well as Europe for a number of years.

As an assistant of Nelly Maes, at the time President of the EFA Group (2000-2004), he became acquainted with the work of the European Parliament and the European Free Alliance, attending the General Meetings which were held in Brussels and Sevilla in September 2000, in Brussels in 2001, in Brno in 2002, in Alghero in 2003, and in Barcelona in 2004. Since the middle of 2004, he has worked with Eva Mendoza on behalf of the recognised European political party EFA. Together with the ADVN, he co-ordinated the production of the book celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the EFA.

Mikel IRUJO AMEZAGA
(Caracas, 1972)

Mikel Irujo studied law at the universities of Navarra and Brussels. He was responsible for publications about relations between Euskal Herria and the European Union.



In 1998, Mikel was elected as the Foreign Affairs Secretary of Gazte Abertazleak, the youth organization of Eusko Alkartasuna of which he had been a member since 1991. It was the initiative of the former President, Martin Aranburu, to create a network of all youth organisations of EFA members and realise the possibility of EU funding.

In 1999, Mikel started to work at the European Parliament as an Assistant to Gorka Knörr, and this was a considerable help in promoting contact with all EFA youth organisations. The first EFA Youth Assembly was held in Brussels in 2000, and the second one was held in Bilbao in 2001 (Basque Country), where the statutes were approved, and he was elected as the first President. In 2004, the EU-funded project “Diversity is Richness” was completed (mostly thanks to the work of Eva Mendoza). Thanks to the electoral agreement which has been reached with the ERC and Chunta Aragonesista in 2004, Mikel will become a Member of the European Parliament in 2007.

her the right to intervene in the first round of the plenary debates, which also gave the EFA subgroup its own identity.

A driving force is lost: the Volksunie falls apart

Ever since the founding of the EFA, the Flemish Volksunie party had been the driving force behind the alliance (cf. supra). What’s more, ever since 1979 at least one MEP had been a representative of the VU. Since its formation in 1954, the Flemish nationalist party had made a material contribution to the Belgian federalisation process and the consolidation of Flemish autonomy. In the nineties, the party fell prey to internal strife and disintegrated into several factions. Two smaller parties eventually rose from the ashes: the Nieuw Vlaamse Alliantie or N-VA (New Flemish Alliance) and Spirit. The latter can be seen as the heir to the left wing of the VU, which had produced the likes of Coppieters, Vandemeulebroucke, Kuijpers, Maes and Staes.⁹

What was to happen to the European Parliament seats of the former VU? As the heir to the VU, the N-VA felt it automatically belonged to the EFA.¹⁰ In the meantime, Spirit had been founded (10 November 2001) and the party requested membership almost immediately.

This was no surprise, since the party’s two Euro MPs, Staes and eventually Maes, had opted for Spirit.¹¹ Furthermore, the party’s manifesto stated that: “*The founding congress underwrites the EFA’s objectives and wishes to accede.*”¹² However, no party could automatically become a member of the EFA-DPPE: this required an application. The General Assembly would make the final decision.¹³ In May 2002, the Bureau granted Spirit temporary membership of the EFA-DPPE.¹⁴ One month later, the General Assembly in Brno (Moravia) unanimously ratified this decision.¹⁵ At that same meeting, the N-VA motivated¹⁶ the application it had submitted on 19 December 2001.¹⁷ Nelly Maes stated that she personally didn’t object to accession by the N-VA.¹⁸ The fact that she was both president of the EFA and a Euro MP for Spirit forced her into a very uncomfortable position.

The Spirit party, by its president Els Van Weert, did speak out against possible membership of the N-VA, at the November 2002 General Assembly. She invoked Article 5b of the articles of association, claiming that ‘for the time being, accession of the N-VA would not be conducive to the effective functioning of EFA.’¹⁹ After all, EFA members could prevent the accession of a party from the same region. Article 5b stated that: “(...) *A na-*

tion/region may be represented by only one political party. However, another party politically active in the same geographical area may become a member with the consent of the member of the Federation, the two then forming a single delegation, unless the General Assembly decides otherwise by a two-thirds majority of its full members. (...)²⁰ The article had been introduced at the time, mainly at the instigation of Jaak Vandemeulebroucke, to exclude the Flemish party Vlaams Blok from the EFA (founded in 1979, this party resulted from the fusion of two radical groups that had separated from the VU²¹).²² However, the scenario in which a single member broke up into two new parties was not included in the articles of association, as Patrice Abeille (Ligue Savoisiennne) pointed out.²³ Jesús Maestro (ERC) underlined that “*la posición de Spirit es absolutamente fundamental*” and also that ERC supported Spirit’s decision “*ya que lo consideran su representante legítimo*”.²⁴ Eventually, the N-VA was not to join the EFA.



Gorka KNÖRR BORRAS
(Tarragona, 1950)

Gorka Knörr was elected as a Member of the European Parliament in the elections of June 1999 to represent the parties Eusko Alkartasuna (EA) (from the Basque Country) and Esquerra Republicana

de Catalunya (ERC) (from Catalonia) in the European Free Alliance (EFA). He served in the European Parliament until June 2001, when he was nominated by his party EA, of which he was then the General Secretary, to stand as a candidate in the elections of the Basque Parliament of May 2001. He served as the Vice-President of the ALE/EFA until 2003.

As a result of the elections, he was elected as the first Vice-President of the Basque Parliament, a position which he held until the legislative period came to an end in May 2005.

Gorka promoted the objectives and activities of the EFA and was a firm advocate of its being made into a European political party in accordance with the new EU regulations. While serving in the European Parliament, he frequently travelled to a number of countries with the EFA, and was a rapporteur on a working paper to discuss the matter of the constitution of the EFA as a European party before the Sardinian Assembly in June 2003.

In view of his having been a singer-songwriter (his latest record – the eighth – came out in the month of April and was sung in Catalanian and Basque) and his having belonged to several different cultural associations and entities, Gorka is well-known not only in political circles in the Basque Country, but also in cultural arenas. He has currently been appointed as the President of the San Sebastian Espai Catalunya Topalekua, an institution that serves as a meeting point for Catalonia and the Basque Country (Gorka was born in Catalonia and speaks both Basque and Catalanian fluently).

Apart from his political activities, he currently works for a company in the private sector and gives song recitals in Catalonia. As a lover of languages, he speaks Basque, Catalanian, Spanish, French, Italian, and English. As he often says: **“Many Europeans carry a great wealth of diversity within them. I am a descendent of Germans from Baden-Württemberg, I was born in Catalonia, my homeland and my mother’s homeland, and I have been living in the the Basque Country since my childhood. All these cultures and frames of reference have shaped my identity and I am proud of all of them. I only hope that Europe will in future come to identify herself with the great diversity which exists within its borders”.**

Neil MACCORMICK
(Glasgow, 1941)

Neil MacCormick, a Scottish National Party MEP (1999-2004) and the Vice-President of the SNP (1999-2004), was a member of the EFA section of the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament, and represented the EFA at the European Constitutional Convention of 2002-2003 as an alternate member. Professor of Public Law and the Law of Nature and Nations at the University of Edinburgh, 1972-2008. Author of many books and articles on the philosophy of law and political philosophy, including works on the philosophy of 'liberal nationalism'. Most recent publications 'Questioning Sovereignty: Law State and Nation in the European Commonwealth' (Oxford, OUP, 1999); 'Who's Afraid of a European Constitution?' (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2005); and 'Rhetoric and the Rule of Law' (Oxford: OUP, 2005). An honorary Doctor of Laws from universities in Canada, Germany, Italy, Scotland and Sweden, a Member of the Academia Europaea, and a Foreign Member of the Finnish Academy. He has been a political activist in Scotland for many years, contesting five parliamentary elections before being elected to the European Parliament. He is a law and philosophy scholar who enjoys a very good reputation internationally. Neil MacCormick is an honorary member of the EFA.



The ongoing crisis within the VU carried great symbolic significance for the various EFA partners. The idea that something like this could happen to a successful party raised similar spectres for their own organisation: such a scenario was no longer unthinkable to anyone. Most of all, however, the partners asked themselves how the EFA would cope without its traditional binding agent, the VU. Neil MacCormick (SNP) voiced his concern in the summer of 2001: *“We believe it is very important for Flanders, for the European Free Alliance and indeed for Europe that there continues to be a strong and unified voice of democratic and constitutional nationalism in Flanders. (...) We are very concerned to ensure that in the European Parliament elections of 2004, there is a strong and solidary campaign involving EFA Parties in at least the countries which are now represented (...) and many others as well. We expect our President Nelly Maes to continue giving us inspiring leadership in this campaign. We hope she, and her colleague Bart Staes, will do so with the strong support they deserve from their home country.”*²⁵ But when Spirit formed a cartel with the Flemish social-democrats in July 2002 to make the electoral threshold of 5 percent, Bart Staes joined the Greens – he did continue to pay his contribution to the EFA-DPPE right up to the end of the legislature.²⁶ In February 2004, the N-VA formed a cartel with the Flemish Christian Democrats. Spirit now had only one Euro MP left: Nelly Maes. This means that Staes and Maes remained in the same group, albeit in different subgroups.

That is why it was not entirely insignificant – following this difficult period – that a sizeable delegation from Spirit attended the founding ceremony of the EFA as a political party in Barcelona in March 2004 (cf. supra).²⁷ The EFA partners could rest easy: there was still an EFA, even after the demise of the VU.²⁸

Towards a Europe of the Regions in the twenty-first century: Convention, constitution & enlargement

Since the day of its formation, the EFA has strived for a *different* Europe. That was still the case in this term. The EFA wanted a new and improved EU and in practice this trans-

lated into “a call for full recognition of the right to self-government of all those territorial entities in the Union whose citizens have a strong and shared sense of national, linguistic, or regional identity, whether such entities of one kind or another, or remain for the present unrecognised in the constitutional structure of state.”²⁹

The EFA used the momentum created by the Belgian presidency of the EU (July through December 2001) to safeguard the input of the constitutional regions in the European project.³⁰ Nelly Maes stated: “Surely we can’t expect Verhofstadt to cast aside the achieved Flemish autonomy by not including these regions in Europe’s vision of the future?”³¹ The Belgian presidency was concluded with the Laeken declaration (15 December 2001) in which the European Council announced the creation of a Convention on the future of the EU.³² The following items were on the EFA’s wish list: recognition of regions, cultures and ‘stateless nations’; giving the constitutional regions their own place in Europe and the same access to the European institutions as the member states; a bicameral system with a First Chamber that represents the citizens and a Second Chamber in which the states and regions are represented; an elected European government and the recognition of constitutional pluralism.³³ The EFA wanted to involve the constitutional regions directly in the Convention.³⁴

Euro MP for the SNP Neil MacCormick represented the group in the Convention together with Johannes Voggner of the Austrian Greens: “This gives the European Free Alliance a historic chance to carry the claims of stateless nations and regions right to the very heart of the debate on the future of the European Union.” The Laeken Declaration was greeted favourably by the EFA: “It should be stressed that the Laeken declaration contains multiple references to the competences and roles of the regions and that, for the first time, the category of the ‘regions endowed with legislative competences’ is recognised in an official document of the European Council.”³⁵



Miquel MAYOL I RAYNAL (1941)

In a political sense, Miquel Mayol i Raynal belongs to the 1968 generation. “At that time,” Mikel Mayol recalls, “a cultural, political and non-violent resistance to French imperialism

had begun in northern Catalunya (N.C.) or “Rosello”, the part of Catalunya that was annexed by France in the mid-17th century.”

Mayol belonged to this movement. “We founded Catalan “cradle” schools (‘La Bressola’). To strengthen the relationship with our fellow citizens who were fighting against Franco’s dictatorial regime, we created the ‘Universitat Catalana d’Estiu’ (Summer Catalan University) at Prades (N.C.). Finally, we decided to take a big step forward by founding the first northern Catalan political party “Esquerra Catalana dels Treballadors” (Catalan Workers’ Party) in 1972.”

It is probably due to his activities during this radical Catalan “revival” in N.C. that the oldest political party in S.C., Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC), asked him to stand as a candidate in the European elections of 1999.

Between 2002 and 2004, Mayol was a Member of the European Parliament. He was unsuccessful in his attempt to have the Greens/EFA Group ask for the right of all nations to self-determination to be included European Constitution. Mayol says that the fight against the Spanish Partido Popular (PP) was necessary, particularly after 11 September 2001 and in view of the hydrological national plan (PHN) which was introduced by that party.

Looking back at his time period with the EFA, Miquel Mayol stated: “With EFA I played a full role in helping European minorities (Hungarians in Slovakia and Macedonians in Greece), bearing in mind the help we received from Flemish V.U. MEPs”.

Miquel Mayol i Raynal is an honorary member of the EFA.

Eva MENDOZA
(Granada, 1978)

Eva Mendoza started her professional carrier in the EFA working for the MEP Carlos Bautista, representing the 'Partido Andalucista' at the European Parliament.



In addition to her duties as a parliamentary assistant, she was also in charge of the Youth. She organised the third General Assembly of the youth branch of the EFA, the EFAY (May 2003). It was a success and this gave her the opportunity to start thinking more seriously about working exclusively for EFAY, as she had previous experience as a youth trainer and project manager and was also very interested in Youth issues.

Therefore, at the end of the parliamentary term, she remained with the EFA Group in the EP, being in charge of the EFAY. This was the first time that the youth branch of the EFA had a paid position in its short history (the EFAY was formally founded in the year 2000). The main activities during her period as Co-coordinator were two General Assemblies and a project funded by the European Commission called "Diversity is Richness" (April 2004).

She and Günther Dauwen then started to co-direct the newly created EFA Party. After José Luis Linazasoro, they are currently the permanent staff of the EFA and are in charge of the co-ordination of the European activities as well as the press, legal and financial aspects of the organisation.

She studied law at the University of Sevilla, taking a degree specializing in the EU, International and Comparative law at the Robert Schuman University in Strasbourg. She got a Postgraduate Diploma in Human Rights from the Saint Louis Faculties in Brussels and Louvain-La-Neuve. She is also a trainer who is specialized in the field of teenagers and who has also prepared as a trainer in the fields of ethnic conflicts and conflict management. She speaks English, French, Italian and basic Arabic as well as Spanish, her mother tongue.

MacCormick contributed to the Convention with, amongst others, "*Democracy at many levels: European Constitutional Reform*", in which he voiced the standpoints of the EFA subgroup. The document stated that the EFA was in favour of a formal European constitution "*with adequate guarantees for democracy, subsidiarity, cultural and linguistic pluralism, human rights and the protection of minorities in the Union.*" Subsidiarity was crucial: the constitution could not be used as an excuse for the creation of a European superstate, but had to reserve certain powers for the member states and the "*the self-governing territorial entities within them*". In other words, the constitutional regions (Andalusia, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Flanders, Galicia, Scotland and Wales) needed to be recognised as "*partners in the governance of the Union.*"³⁶ In Brno, the EFA General Assembly established nine priorities the Convention had to take into account. For instance, the EFA wanted a better use of the term 'region', constituencies that coincide with the constitutional regions, the reform or abolition of the Committee of the Regions, the taking into account of all legislative bodies of the Union, the right of access to the European Court of Justice for all territorial entities, a clearer definition of the principle of subsidiarity, a more important role for the parliaments of the constitutional regions and the protection of linguistic diversity in the European Union. At the end of 2002, MacCormick was optimistic that Europe would comply with these particular wishes: "*He thinks that we are going to win the direct access for constitutional regions to the Court of Justice. And if the Charter on Fundamental Rights gets incorporated into the Constitutional Treaty its Article 22 on the respect of linguistic diversity will have binding legal force.*"³⁷

More than one hundred representatives of EFA parties attended the "Summit of Ministers, Party Leaders and Members of Parliament" organised by the EFA-DPPE in Flanders in November 2000. They exchanged views on the situation of the regions in Europe

following the Treaty of Nice.³⁸ The Assembly adopted the **Declaration of Brussels** (see Annex 5). It was a concise and updated recapitulation of the standpoints the EFA had championed since its formation. With this declaration, the EFA wanted to carve out a real niche for the regions within the European construction: subsidiarity guaranteed in the European constitution “*at all levels, with direct effect*”, an adjusted electoral procedure, a Second Chamber “*that would subsume some aspects of the present Committee of the Regions, consistently with sustaining the essentially confederal character of the European Union.*” The EFA also continued to link diversity within the European Union to the respect of human rights: “*EFA/DPPE considers the principle of democratic governance and respect of human rights as the main criteria for admission and membership of the EU. States must examine their own constitutions and government practices to eliminate any surviving elements of cultural repression inherited from an imperialistic past.*” Also striking was the fact that the EFA referred to itself as “progressive nationalists” or regionalists whose basic principle is not a nationalism based on blood ties, but one that is “*civic and inclusive in seeking to identify the relevant national communities around common civil institutions*”.³⁹

The eventual constitutional draft caused dissent across Europe and the EFA was no exception. Ian Hudghton (SNP), Alyn Smith (SNP) and Bernat Joan i Mari (ERC) called on the Scots and the Catalans to vote against the constitution in the referendum. Joan i Mari’s “*pro-European ‘no’ to the constitution*” was inspired by the question “*How should we act before an EU that doesn’t recognise us?*”. “*Better no constitution than a bad one!*”, he claimed. The SNP was particularly displeased about the fact that ‘Brussels’ would have complete control over the Scottish fishing industry.⁴⁰ In the spring of 2005, several countries followed the example of the French “*non*” and the Dutch “*neen*” to the draft text. The EFA was disappointed and called for a “*condense and clear Constitution in which citizens can recognise the soul of the EU project. The EU also needs a policy that really takes into account the diversity of regions and cultures.*”⁴¹



**Camilo NOGUEIRA
ROMAN (Vigo, 1936)**

Camilo Nogueira is an industrial engineer and studied economics. During the sixties, Camilo Nogueira was the President of a political and cultural opposition to Franco’s dictatorship in this

town for a while: the Asociación Cultural de Vigo (the Cultural Association of Vigo). In 1973, Camilo Nogueira started to work for the SODIGA (Sociedad para el Desarrollo Industrial de Galicia) in Santiago. As a member of Galicia Socialista, he paved the way for current Galician nationalism. In 1971, following the merger between Galicia Socialista and the UPG (Unión do Povo Galego), he assisted the Asamblea Nacional Popular Galega and the Bloque Nacional Popular Galego. He appeared on the lists of candidates for these parties in the elections in 1977. Later, Camilo Nogueira contributed to the emergence of POG (Partido Obreiro Galego), which evolved into Esquerda Galega and merged with PSG (PSG-EG), ultimately being integrated into the BNG as Unidade Galega in 1995. He was a Member of Parliament in Galicia from 1981-85, 1985-89, 1989-93 and 1997-99, until he left for the EP. Camilo Nogueira was elected as a Member of the European Parliament for Bloque Nacionalista Galego in 1999. He played a very active part in the Committee on Transport and the Committee on Fisheries, and defended the poor fishermen, when the Prestige sunk and Madrid was clearly not interested.

Camilo Nogueira was one of the editors of the ANTEPROYECTO of the Autonomy Statute of Galicia in the Committee of the 16. He is an honorary member of the EFA.

Bart STAES (Izegem, 1958)

Bart Staes joined the EFA in 1983. As a member of the Parliamentary group staff, he mainly worked for Jaak Vandemeulebroucke and later also for Willy Kuijpers. One of the first files there involved the processing of the results of a survey which was conducted in all Frisian municipalities with regard to the use of the Frisian language by town councils in their dealings with citizens. Together with Jaak Vandemeulebroucke and Herman Verheirstraeten, Staes took the explosive report to Ljouwert (Friesland) where they handed the conclusions over to the Provinciale Staten (Provincial Assembly). The action proved a booster for EFA partner and sister party FNP which enjoyed considerable media exposure as a result. **“In fact this was one of the basic characteristics of the EFA parliamentary representatives,”** Staes recalls: **“not only were you an elected representative of your own people at the EP, you also represented all peoples and regional parties who, for a variety of different reasons, never quite managed to have one of their own elected into the European Parliament.”**



During the 1980's, he witnessed the expansion of the EFA at close quarters, attending the general conferences in Wales, German-speaking Belgium, Sardinia, Brittany, Aosta, etc. During this time, the party's platform was being elaborated, **“with a lost of zest, in due seriousness as well as in high spirits,”** Bart Staes comments. **“We were never at a loss when it came to practical jokes or pulling an unexpected stunt,”** he reminisces. **“Not trying to argue that what was wrong was right, setting ourselves up as the fleas ruffling the fur coat of the establishment, ... something which continues to be our creed to this very day. And very much what I have been standing for as an MEP since 1999.”** Staes was elected Member of the European Parliament in 1999 for the Volksunie. After the VU split and after the choice made by Spirit to enter into a mixed party list with the socialist party in Flanders, Staes switched to join Groen! (Flemish greens) and since then, has also been a member of the Green parliamentary group.

May of 2004 saw the biggest-ever enlargement of the EU with the accession of Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus. Most of these countries are home to important minorities the EFA had attempted to make contact with even before the enlargement. As early as November 2001 observer status had been granted to Ruch Autonomii Slaska (the Silesian minority in Poland), the Moravská Demokratická Strana (Union of Moravians, Czech Republic), Liga Transilvania-Banat (Romania) and Magyar Föderalista Párt (Hungarian Federalist Party, Slovakia). The Lithuanian Polish People's Party (Lietuvos Lenku Liaudies Partija – Polska Partia Ludowa) was next in November 2003.⁴² José Luis Linazasoro, assisted by Bartłomiej Swiderek then responsible for enlargement within the EFA, cultivated contacts with the “Party For Human Rights in a United Latvia”, a party that asserted the rights of the Russian-speaking minority (30%) in Latvia.⁴³ It was within this context that Linazasoro attended a party conference in Riga in April 2001.⁴⁴ In February 2004, shortly before the European elections, Nelly Maes' assistant Günther Dauwen also travelled to Riga to strengthen the ties with Zdanoka's party. Such contacts were of the greatest importance to the EFA, as became clear following the 2004 European Parliament elections (cf. infra).⁴⁵

What was so special about all this was the fact that these were all parties from Central and East European candidate member states.⁴⁶ The enlargement enabled the EFA to recruit new partners for its project. In July 2003, Jill Evans made the following statement at a regionalist conference in Lithuania: *“We need new partners in Central Europe in order to enrich EFA. We seek friends in the accession countries and therefore I think that this day is a first step towards a serious discussion on the future of a new Europe.”*⁴⁷ This attitude was not entirely devoid of pragmatism: like all European political parties, the EFA has to prove every year that it meets all imposed criteria, including the requirement of representation in 25% of the total number of member

states (cf. supra). It is of some importance to keep in mind that 2004 – an election year by the way – was both the year of the enlargement of the EU and that of the EFA's formation as a political party.

The EFA argued that, instead of merely applying quantitative criteria to the question of accession, attention should also be paid to the state of democracy, human rights and the treatment of minorities in candidate member states.⁴⁸ Rash accession was to be avoided at all costs – a sentiment voiced as early as 1989 (cf. supra). The need for this became clear when, for instance, EFA observer Liga Transilvania-Banat was outlawed by a Romanian court in November 2002. In the opinion of EFA president Nelly Maes, this “*clearly violates the basic principles of the European Union: freedom, democracy, prosperity and unity through diversity.*”⁴⁹ Similar occurrences have taken place in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey.⁵⁰ Another case in point is the situation of the Roma in various Central and East European countries – the group organised a conference on the subject in October 2001.⁵¹ However, Catalan Euro MP Miquel Mayol drew attention to the hypocrisy of a country like France, which itself failed to honour certain qualitative criteria with regard to minorities.⁵²

Attention was not exclusively focused on the enlargement of the EU. The EFA held the opinion that more than enough work remained to be done in the present member states. The party felt that the constitutional territories and regions needed to be given a place within the European whole.⁵³ Several accession countries were small states that now became member states with all the rights this entails. “*How will similar sized countries that constitute ‘regions’ or large states stand in comparison to the new small states? What assurance can they have that, as components of large states, they exercise a fair share of power in Council?*” EFA's Euro MPs wondered.⁵⁴ If the constitutional regions got nothing in return, then the natural alliance between the regions and the EU against the nation states' centralism would come under pressure.⁵⁵ This is how Ian Hudghton, Euro MP for the SNP, which is in favour of Scotland's independence within Europe, put it: “*I look forward to the day when Scots ministers will sit alongside Irish in the Council of Ministers, as equal partners with full rights to negotiate and vote, putting Scotland's interests first and not, as at present, merely acting as bag-carriers for their Westminster bosses.*”⁵⁶

In the meantime, the EFA continued to stand up for the small(er) parties and both the party and the group attempted to give a voice to those regions that were not represented in the European Parliament. Euro MP Bart Staes, for instance, addressed the question



Bartłomiej SWIDEREK
(Gliwice, Upper Silesia,
1976)

Member of the board of the Ruch Autonomii CEI ska (RAS) party. Over the 2003-2004 time span, Swiderek worked as a member of staff at the European Parliament on issues related to enlargement, aiming at attracting regional and minority parties from accession and candidate countries to the EFA. He was co-organiser of a series of conferences in Vilnius (Lithuania), Katowice (Upper Silesia, Poland) and Cluj (Romania). He also authored a report on troubles of the Macedonian minority parties in Greece (2003) and the article “The enlargement of the European Union from the other side of the wall - The point of view from Poland” (“Europa ante su futuro” Bilbao-2004). In 2004-2005, he served as the EFA's treasurer and ever since has been involved with a variety of different European projects staged by local and regional authorities in the Silesia province/Poland.

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Eurig WYN (Hermon nr Crymch, 1944)

Eurig Wyn studied at the University of Wales. Previous to his election as a Member of the European Parliament (1999-2004), Eurig was a BBC journalist for Wales and was a Plaid Cymru member of the Committee of the Regions where he was Vice-President. He is an honorary member of the EFA.



Wyn is fluent in Welsh, his mother tongue.

Something which he duly demonstrated in September 2003, when – during a debate on the position of minority languages, he went on to deliver part of his address in Welsh.

Asked for his message to EFA, Eurig Wyn said: **“I hope things are well with EFA. Democracy, human rights and self-government for the stateless nations of Europe are attainable goals as long as EFA continues campaigning energetically. Freedom for minorities is a concept that the imperialist states of the European Union have never understood. But an open Europe of autonomous regions and nations defending their diverse languages, cultures and grass roots democracy is a dream that can only be realised through EFA’s continued presence in European politics. Our hard work will soon produce the goal we all cherish: A Europe of Unity in Diversity. Keep campaigning.”**

of the environmental disaster with the tanker “Erika” off Brittany on behalf of the UDB.⁵⁷ The party did the same at the end of 2002, but this time in conjunction with the BNG, when the “Prestige” sank off the Galician coast and the EFA’s Euro MPs implored Spanish Prime Minister Aznar: *“Nunca mais”* (“Never again”). Camilo Nogueira Román, who is himself a Galician, received a round of applause when he launched an appeal – in Portuguese of all languages – to leave authority to the region with the best appreciation of the matter: *“Uma vez mais os governos dos Estados não estiveram à altura das circunstâncias. Depois do ocorrido na Galiza, pode haver ainda alguma dúvida de que a sede da Agência deve localizar-se na região em que circula a maior parte do tráfico intercontinental e onde existe o maior perigo de acidentes?”*⁵⁸ Nikos Kalinis of Vinozito argued that *“(…) EFA support (…) helped normalise the party and the party is now well respected.”*⁵⁹

Terrorism

The EFA’s attitude towards violence and terrorism remained unchanged. The party condemned the increasing ETA violence in 2000. *“The step-up of violence cannot be tolerated. It’s a naked attempt to undermine democracy and to polarise politics in the Basque country. Democratic parties must not allow this to happen. The Basque members of our group (from the Partido Nacionalista Vasco and Eusko Alkartasuna) will continue*

*their search for peace and democracy in their country.”*⁶⁰ The party’s reaction to the 9/11 terrorist attacks fell along the same lines. The group also called for circumspection in the ensuing war in Afghanistan: *“The danger posed by terrorism cannot be resolved through military action. It must be addressed as part of a comprehensive political strategy, under the auspices of the United Nations. Any such strategy must be committed to resolve the Middle East conflict.”*⁶¹ Josu Ortuondo (PNV) reacted vigorously when the conservative Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar (Partido Popular) obstinately continued to place the blame for the terrorist attacks in Madrid (11 March 2004) squarely at the feet of ETA while simultaneously attempting to discredit the nationalists shortly before the Spanish and European elections.⁶²

The Battle for Diversity

The EFA slogan was “Unity in diversity”, but there was still a long way to go in that respect. Even though 2001 was designated the “European Year of Languages”, education in France remained a major source of dissatisfaction. Following her visit to Brittany, Euro MP Maes asked the French Education Secretary to devote more attention to education in Breton.⁶³ The *Conseil d’Etat* refused to include the Diwan schools (Breton-French elementary schools) in the public education system because they were supposedly unconstitutional. Consequently the EFA Euro MPs submitted a draft resolution to have France adjust its language legislation to the European norm. Miquel Mayol i Raynal (ERC): “*Cette situation est tellement contraire aux valeurs européennes de promotion des diversités linguistiques et culturelles et de respect des minorités que le Parlement de Strasbourg ne peut accepter qu’un Etat membre, aussi puissant et aussi prestigieux soit-il, puisse impunément bafouer ces valeurs.*”⁶⁴ The EFA Euro MPs supported Yannig Baron (president of Dihun Breizh) in his hunger strike to demand more teachers to teach Breton and teach in Breton.⁶⁵ In 1999, president Jacques Chirac’s refusal to ratify Europe’s Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (cf. supra) also caused resentment amongst French regionalists such as the UDB and the UPC.⁶⁶ There were other regions where the situation of minority languages wasn’t any better. The EFA came to the aid of its newest member in Greece, Vinozito, by pressuring the Greek government to officially recognise the language of the Macedonian community and allow it to be taught locally.⁶⁷



The EFA-MEPs in the European Parliament in 2002, after Bart Staes had left the EFA.
From left to right: Camilo Nogueira, Ian Hudghton, Carlos Bautista, Eurig Wyn, Jill Evans, Nelly Maes, Neil MacCormick, Miquel Mayol i Raynal and Josu Ortuondo (PNV).

The EFA also continued to champion diversity in other areas. In 2001, Jill Evans became chairwoman of the newly founded “EFA women’s network”, a permanent collaboration of EFA women’s associations.⁶⁸ In the spring of 2002, for instance, a women’s conference was organised in Barcelona on the following theme: “*Bastim un nou món sense violències*” (Building a new world without violence).⁶⁹ Due to the enlargement of the Union, Jill Evans and Nelly Maes worried about the number of female MEPs from the accession countries. That is why they drew attention to the example of the new National Assembly for Wales, which had equal representation.⁷⁰ As vice-chairwoman of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Equal Opportunities in the EP, this issue was very close to home for Evans.⁷¹ It was only logical, therefore, that Evans should be made chairwoman of the women’s network established by the EFA with a view to achieving a higher degree of female participation in both regional and European politics. With its female chairperson, the EFA was a case in point.

From federation to European political party: Barcelona 2004

On 26 March 2004, several months prior to the European elections, the EFA was established as a fully fledged European political party. The party’s memorandum of association was signed in Barcelona. EFA President Nelly Maes declared: “*We were founded over twenty years ago as a federation of political parties and today we have become a fully-fledged political party in our own right. Working together at the European level, we are now in a much stronger position to fight for the rights of Europe’s regions and stateless nations thanks to today’s agreement. We look forward with confidence to the European elections in June. Our fight for full democratic representation and recognition of the rights of Europe’s regions and stateless nations is infinitely strengthened by the even closer alliance we have formed today in Barcelona.*”⁷² Representatives of 31 parties (including 5 observers) signed the memorandum of association.⁷³

The reasons for turning the federation into a political party were diverse. One of them was obviously the legal personality that comes with being a political party, as was the case for the other political families as well (Socialists, Greens, Christian Democrats & Liberals). This made it possible for small parties without representation in the European Parliament to be involved in European politics. Not to forget, there was also the Union’s separate financing of groups and parties. To quote Gorka Knörr, the status of political party was necessary to make sure that the EFA becomes ‘the natural defender of the interests of every region and nation within the European states.’⁷⁴ Also, the party’s day-to-day operations required more and more effort and it became increasingly difficult to combine the work with the activities in the European Parliament, which took precedence.⁷⁵ On occasion this even gave rise to genuine problems, a point amply proven by Herman Verheirstraeten’s dilemma in the Lega Nord affair in 1994 (cf. supra).

However, the preparations for the conversion were quite demanding. In June 2003 the General Assembly in Alghero (Sardinia) declared itself in favour establishing a pan-European party and instructions were given “*to take the necessary steps to acquire that status*

*(of European political party) to ensure that, in practical terms, it can once and for all become the essential reference point for the movement of nations and regions within the European states.”*⁷⁶

The possibility of forming a political party on a European level had only just been created, even though the 1992 Maastricht Treaty already alluded to it (cf. supra). Setting up the party was no simple affair. European political parties had to meet a number of requirements, such as possessing legal personality in the member state where party headquarters were located, being represented in the European Parliament or in legislative assemblies at national or regional level in at least one quarter of the Member States, respecting the basic principles of the EU and taking part in the European elections. European political parties were eligible for funding according to the number of seats held in the European Parliament. Every year they had to file a request with the European parliament in order to secure that funding. Nevertheless, the parties still had to generate 25 percent of their financial means themselves (through member contributions, donations, etc.) and every year they had to submit the party books to the European Court of Auditors for audit.⁷⁷

The EFA had trouble meeting the financial requirement. According to José Luis Linazasoro there were two possibilities: “*Either we maintain the present EFA contribution system and we lose part of the future European direct subvention. Either we increase the party contributions to reach 25% of own resources.*”⁷⁸ That is why the system of contributions, which had been introduced in 1996, was adjusted (increased) at the eleventh hour.⁷⁹ The system depended on the Members of the European Parliament and mainly spelt trouble for the small parties. Until Plaid Cymru had two MEPs in 1999 it had always been difficult for the party to fulfil its financial duty.⁸⁰

The requirement with regard to parliamentary representation also caused quite a few headaches. Being represented in at least one fourth of the member states – initially one third had been put forward – meant that, in the Europe of 25, the party needed MPs (European, national or regional parliament) from seven different member states.

EFA-Youth

The party also put a lot of work into the creation of a youth organisation. The initiative had been announced at the November 2000 EFA summit (cf. supra).⁸¹ Youngsters from various regionalist parties discussed what they wanted Europe and the new organisation to look like. EFA-Youth (EFAY), as the organisation was to be called, was described as “*(...) a federation of Youth organisations of the political parties that integrate the ‘European Free Alliance – Democratic Party of the peoples of Europe’, open to other organisations and/or associations.*”⁸² One of the pioneers was Mikel Irujo (EA), who was an assistant to Gorka Knörr in the European Parliament. He organised the Constituency Assembly on the 9th of November 2000, in Brussels. Representatives of 15 organisations participated.⁸³ Mikel Irujo was elected as the first EFAY President and chaired a bureau composed by 6 other organisations.⁸⁴

In December 2001 a new Bureau was elected in Bilbao with Catalan Pere Aragonès (Joventuts Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya) as chairman. At this meeting, a discussion on “*lesser used languages*” was also held.⁸⁵ From 2003 to the end of 2004, the tasks within the EFAY were coordinated by Eva Mendoza, assistant to MEP Carlos Bautista first and then exclusively in charge of EFAY.

In May 2003, Jonas Dutordoir, from Prego (Spirit's youth section) was elected chairman by the General Assembly held at the European Parliament, in Brussels.⁸⁶ Under his Presidency, the youth section of EFA wanted to be more active on the European stage “*in a more organised and effective way. This is the moment to start co-ordinating our European activities and joined actions. If we have the opportunity to engage a person within the EFA, we do not want to loose (sic) our chances.*”⁸⁷

The EFAY achieved to have its first European funds (YOUTH Programme, European Commission) with the project entitled “Diversity is Richness”. It took place in April 2004 and was hosted by Prego. Twelve youth organisations participated: Youth organisation of the Hungarian Federalist Party, Union für Südtirol, Partito Sardo d’Azione, Prego, Union Démocratique Bretonne, Ligue Savoisiennne, Young Moravians, Upper Silesian youth, JERC, Galiza Nova, Gazte Abertzaleak and MK-Youth.⁸⁸

EFAY became, at the end of 2004, an International Non-Governmental Youth Organisation (INGYO), which meant it was eligible for government funding by the European Commission and other interntional entities as the Council of Europe.⁸⁹ The search for financial means was a crucial problem for an international youth association such as EFAY. That is also the reason why so many of the previous initiatives had met with failure.⁹⁰

With the formation of the EFA as a European political party, EFAY wanted to keep its privileged relation with the party. That is why the youth wing of EFA was formally established in Barcelona by 25 associations from, amongst others, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Galicia, Flanders, Scotland, Wales, Aragon and Moravia.⁹¹ In 2004, the EFA also funded several events, for instance, a youth exchange in Brno, Moravia, where some organisations from the EFAY meet with youngters from civic organisations of the Balkans.⁹² From August 2005 EFAY has, with the help of EFA the party and EFA the group, a second full time co-ordinator, Eva Bidania, from Gazte Aberzaleak.

Towards the European parliamentary elections of June 2004

Simultaneously with the foundation of the EFA as a European political party, a manifesto for the European elections was launched: “*Sovereignty, Social Justice, Subsidiarity. Towards a Europe of diversity*”. Through this programme the EFA wanted Europe to recognise cultural and political diversity within the Union. It also demanded a Europe of the citizens: a more pronounced democracy, a stronger European social model and a stronger focus on peace. Thirdly, the EFA spoke out in favour of a Europe of the regions and peoples: a European Constitution had to be drafted and certain adjustments to the European institutions were necessary. Fourthly, the EFA underlined the necessity of a sustainable energy policy and of the realisation of the millennium objectives in the fight against poverty.⁹³

On the eve of the elections the EFA consisted of 27 parties. Still, the party was in for a rough ride. Nelly Maes failed to get a safe seat and Bart Staes had joined the Greens. Contrary to the Scots and the Welsh, who would get to vote according to the principle of proportional representation for the second time, the nationalists in the Spanish state had to deal with a disadvantageous electoral system: the whole country was considered as one single constituency.⁹⁴ France had new constituencies, but they didn't coincide with the traditional regions.⁹⁵ And how would the voting go in the accession countries?

Conclusion 1999-2004

The 1999-2004 legislature was a period of change. It was also an eventful period with mixed emotions. After the 1994-1999 legislature, during which the EFA seemed at its last gasp, the EFA once again had a sizeable number of representatives in the European Parliament. The Euro MPs elected to join forces with the larger group of Green Parties, an alliance that would prove enduring. It was a period of renewal: building the party, but also altering Europe, which still largely ignored the regions. There were also a few scrapes, such as the falling apart of the VU and the ensuing problems for the EFA.

In March 2004, the Democratic Party of the Peoples of Europe – European Free Alliance, which had been formed in Barcelona ten years earlier, was transformed into a genuine pan-European party. This new party also encompassed a youth organisation. This was the highlight to date of a project that had begun with the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. The financial and representational requirements constituted the biggest headaches. Attracting new partners was necessary. The EU's enlargement to 25 member states yielded several new members – the result of East European contacts the EFA had already started to cultivate in the eighties.

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EFA in the sixth legislative period (2004-2009)

The European elections of June 2004

In the elections of June 2004, the EFA obtained only five seats. The five elected Euro MPs were Ian Hudghton and Alyn Smith for the SNP, Jill Evans for Plaid Cymru, Bernat Joan i Mari for ERC and one Euro MP who joined the party as an individual member: Tatjana Zdanoka of the Latvian party *Par cilvēka tiesībām vienotā Latvijā* (For Human Rights in a United Latvia).¹ Italy and France did not have any elected members, mainly as a result of the constituencies and electoral thresholds in those countries. Although Nelly Maes was convinced in May 2003 that Spirit would take a seat², the Flemish party did not manage to send anyone to Strasbourg, not even Maes herself. In July 2004, she did become the first President of the political party of the European Free Alliance. N-VA had one elected member who had a seat among the 266 members of the Group of the European People's Party, and only some suggested that the veto of Spirit against the accession of N-VA in 2002 (cf. supra) had now cost the EFA a seat.³ BNG and PNV joined forces with CiU



Jonas DUTORDOIR
(Gent, 1983)

Jonas Dutordoir took his first steps along the political path when he joined the **Volkswinnie-Jongeren** (VUJO) (Youth organisation of the VU) in Flanders at the age of sixteen. After working at a local level

in Gent for various years, he was elected as a member of the Executive Committee of Prego, the youth organisation of Spirit, as the person responsible for activities at an international level. This was how he came to be involved with the activities of EFA Youth

and was ultimately elected as the President in 2003. He thought that the most significant accomplishments were activities which united young people from the whole of Europe, for example the Diversity is Richness Meeting (2004). At this meeting, an attempt was made to allow young people to experience some of the opportunities which Europe has to offer and to use various activities as a way of exploring the body of ideas of the EFA from a number of angles. At the same time, there have been further changes to the structure of the organisation, including the establishment of a secretariat in Brussels. In the meantime, Jonas has studied history at the University of Gent, and he embarked on a master's degree in EU studies in 2005.



Jillian EVANS
(Rhondda, 1959)

Jill Evans entered the European Parliament in 1999 with Eurig Wyn. It was a historical moment for Plaid Cymru, who were for the first time able to send people to the European Parliament. Jill had already

represented Plaid Cymru on the Committee of the Regions for four years since 1993. In 2004, she was re-elected as a Member of the European Parliament.

Jill was concerned about women's problems. She had also spent six years working for the National

Federation of Women's Institutes in Wales, and she was the Vice-President of the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities. In 2001, she became the first President of the Women's Network of the EFA.

Jill studied Welsh at the University of Wales (Aberystwyth) and obtained an M.Phil from the Polytechnic of Wales. Vice-President of War on Want Cymru and Plaid Cymru's spokesperson for international affairs. Part-time teacher and self-employed administrator. She was the President of Plaid Cymru from 1994-1996. Since 2003, she has been the Vice-President of Plaid and, since 2004, she has been the Vice-President of the EFA.

in the elections in the form of the coalition "*Galeuzca – Pueblos de Europa*" (Galeuzca – Peoples of Europe).⁴ The Galician Camilo Nogueira Román (BNG) was re-elected, but lost his seat when the result was contested.⁵ Lastly, PNV left the Group: after an internal discussion, Ortuondo was ordered by his party to take up a seat in the group known as the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.⁶

For the second legislative period in succession, the EFA was represented in the group with the Greens, who now numbered 42. This co-operation continued to be necessary if the EFA wanted to make a difference in the Assembly of 732 members.⁷ The Greens Monica Frassoni and Daniel Cohn-Bendit were the Co-Presidents of the Group. Hudghton succeeded Maes as the new President of the EFA Group and as the Vice-President of the Group. As the EFA proportion of the Group was reduced, there was immediately a search for possible new partners.

Party and group: two separate entities

Immediately after the elections of June 2004, two colleagues were recruited by the Bureau of the EFA for the purposes of rapidly preparing an application for subvention (July 2004). As the rules regarding the financing of political parties did not allow these parties to work within the walls of the European Parliament, offices were leased and a start was made on the establishment of the party structure and the party activities. Within a short period of time, the party had also established its own website online. After the elections, the difference between a group and a party became clearer. The presidency is an indication of this: Hudghton and Maes are presidents of their own entity who operate independently of each other. The group (the European Free Alliance in the European Parliament) is under the presidency of Euro MP Hudghton, while the political party (the European Free Alliance, a European political party) is presided over by Nelly Maes, who is no longer a Euro MP. The party, which was recognised as such by the European Parliament in Oc-



The EFA MEPs in 2001 on the stairs in the European Parliament in Strasbourg: Carlos Bautista, Ian Hudghton, Jill Evans, Nelly Maes and Gorka Knörr (first row); Bart Staes, Camilo Nogueira, Eurig Wyn and Neil MacCormick (second row); and Josu Ortuondo (in the back).

tober 2004, acts mainly as a link between the EFA and the regions, while the five elected members of the EFA can concern themselves with the actual work of the Parliament.⁸



Ian HUDGHTON
(Forfar, 1951)

Ian Hudghton was first elected as an SNP Member of the European Parliament in November 1998, following a by-election victory in North East Scotland. Thus, he succeeded the late Allan Macartney. He

is currently a member of the Parliament's Committees on Fisheries and Economic and Monetary Affairs and a substitute member of the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection.

Re-elected in June 1999 and 2004, Ian is the President of the European Free Alliance group of

MEPs and the first Vice-President of the 42-member Greens/EFA Group.

In 2005, Ian was elected as the President of the SNP, following the retirement of Winnie Ewing.

A lifelong campaigner for Scottish independence, Ian joined the Scottish National Party in 1967, Ian was a successful election agent, organising memorable victories for the late Allan Macartney MEP and John Swinney MSP. Ian Hudghton had a distinguished political career in local government as an elected member of the SNP administration in his capacity as the Housing Convener for the Angus District and in his capacity as the Deputy Leader of Tayside Regional Council. Ian was the first Leader of the SNP administration in the Angus Unitary Council. He also served as one of Scotland's representatives on the EU Committee of the Regions for a while.

Frank INGELAERE
(Ypres, 1957)



Ingelaere has an MA in European law, Political Sciences and East European Studies (Universities of Ghent and Brussels). He has taken other courses in The Hague, Cambridge, Luxembourg, Santander and Salzburg. He has been an Assistant in the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Antwerp, a Federal Officer in International Environmental Affairs, a Cabinet Attaché of the Minister for Economic Co-operation, the Deputy Head of the Cabinet of the Flemish Minister for Transport, Foreign Trade and State Reform and a representative of the Flemish government in the EU. He is now the Administrator for Regional Policy and Legal and Constitutional Affairs of the EFA Group in the European Parliament. He has published an **Inleiding tot het internationaal en Europees milieurecht en Grondlijnen van de Europese politieke, economische en monetaire Unie (Introduction to international and European environmental law and Guidelines for the European Political, Economic and Monetary Union)** (published by Kluwer Rechtswetenschappen). His book **Een verkenning van de Europese Grondwet en van het meerlaagse bestuur in de Europese Unie (An examination of the European Constitution and the many layers of government in the European Union)** (published by Keure) was awarded the Emiel Van de Gucht Prize in 2004.

In the group

The (diluted) group of EFA MEPs tried to ensure that the regionalists and the nationalists were able to make a contribution to the joint group with the European Greens. In so doing, particular attention was paid to (minority and lesser used) languages, the further involvement of the regions in the European decision-making process and the observance of human rights. This became clear during the World Social Forum (WSF) in the Brazilian Porto Alegre (January 2005), in which the EFA called upon the EU to recognise all regional languages in the EU and grant them an official status.⁹ After Jill Evans had jointly endorsed the requirement that Welsh be recognised, the British government proceeded to translate the European Constitution into Welsh in accordance with the possibility provided by Article IV-448 of the European Constitution.¹⁰ In November 2005, a breakthrough came when Spain agreed to the use of Catalan, Basque and Galician in a number of European institutions. “*Although much remains to be achieved, this agreement is a great step forward and it will mean a great deal to those whose first or preferred language is Catalan, Galician or Basque. I believe that this agreement also gives new hope to campaigners for Gaelic,*” replied Ian Hudghton with satisfaction.¹¹ In fact, this was progress, as Bernat Joan i Mari again asked at the start of the legislative period that Catalan be recognized as an official language¹²: “*While we wait for our rights to be recognised (...) we would be able to vote in favour of the European Constitution if the Catalan language were to be*

officially recognised. If it is not, how can we vote in favour of a text that does not recognise the stateless nations – the Catalan countries, in our case – nor gives official status to a language such as Catalan, which is spoken by 10 million people? We would like to see a Europe made up of all its real people, a Europe which is equal as regards rights, including national rights for stateless nations, a Europe which is fully democratic or, as we say in Catalan: ...”. The Catalan sentences with which Joan i Mari interspersed his contribution were not included in the minutes, as Catalan was not an official language, according to the President of the European Parliament, Josep Borrell Fontelles, himself a Catalan speaker.¹³ Two months later, in the course of another contribution during a plenary meeting, Bernat Joan i Mari addressed the plenary session in German, which is an official language of the EU.¹⁴

Another important topic was Turkish accession to the European Union, in the context of which respecting the human rights of the Kurds was a priority for the EFA: “(...) *the arrogance that the Turkish government is showing towards this group is an unambiguous sign of immaturity. If the Turkish government keeps on refusing to acknowledge the Kurdish people they block every possible dialogue.*”¹⁵ The accession of Turkey must not take place too quickly. In the discussion, Tatjana Zdanoka referred to her own experiences: “*My country, Latvia, became a Member State of the EU, in spite of the fact that the Latvian authorities did not recognise the rights of linguistic minorities. It was a mistake for EU institutions not to use Latvia’s accession process to promote the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria.*”¹⁶

Violence, terrorism and racism were rejected more than ever. EFA President Nelly Maes expressed this as follows: “*Time after time we have seen that only dialogue can bring about peaceful, sustainable political solutions.*”¹⁷

The EFA continued to profile itself as a defender of the rights of regions, minorities and stateless nations and peoples in Europe. With clockwork regularity it points out that a Europe of the peoples and regions is still far from being a reality. Even in November 2005, 86 parties, including that of the Hungarian minority (Magyar Föderalista Párt), were outlawed in Slovakia. The EFA, of which MFP was an observer member, protested vehemently against this state of affairs: “*With the dissolution of the party HFP the Slovak Republic has not lived up to its international obligations according to the guidelines of the Council of Europe. Banning of 86 parties at one time can clearly be seen as a disregard to the principle of proportionality and is clearly not an exceptional measure but a broad based exclusion mechanism that is incompatible with the principles of democracy,*” according to EFA President, Nelly Maes.¹⁸

NOTES

- 1 Article 3.2 of the articles of association stipulated that an individual could become a member of the EFA, provided that he or she was elected by a party that wasn't an EFA member itself, ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, VEA7(2004): Minutes EFA General Assembly of November 8-9, 2004 in Brussels; “European Free Alliance: Rules of internal order as adopted by the General Assembly in Brussels, November 8th-9th 2004; and modified by the General Assembly in Rennes, [May] 27th-28th 2005”, <http://www.e-f-a.org>.
- 2 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, VEA7(2003): Minutes DPPE-EFA Bureau meeting of May 5, 2003 [in Brussels], p. 7.
- 3 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, VEA7(2004): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of September 9, 2004 in Brussels: update on the political situation in some regions.
- 4 PNV & BNG – Basque and Galician Contribution to European Politics and objectives for next parliament, Press release, May 4, 2004, <http://www.greens-efa.org>.
- 5 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, VEA7(2004): Minutes EFA Bureau meeting of September 9, 2004 in Brussels: update on the political situation in some regions; Nelly Maes vanaf vandaag voorzitter, Press release, July 20, 2004, <http://www.e-f-a.org>.
- 6 ADVN, interview with Nelly Maes by Mathieu Vanhaelewyn, Sinaai, December 13, 2005; Own collection of documents, written testimony by Günther Dauwen to Mathieu Vanhaelewyn, January 31, 2006.
- 7 ADVN, BE ADVN AC652, EFA Fonds, VEA7(2004): Minutes EFA General Assembly of November 8-9, 2004 in Brussels, p. 8.
- 8 ADVN, interview with Nelly Maes by Mathieu Vanhaelewyn, Sinaai, December 13, 2005.

- 9 EFA defends cultural diversity at the World Social Forum (WSF), Press release, January 30, 2005, <http://www.greens-efa.org>; "Cultural Uniformity and democratic deficit vs. Diversity?: Cultural diversity a value added to democracy", speech by Günther Dauwen, Porto Alegre, January 29, 2005.
- 10 **EFA Bulletin**, January-March 2005, p. 4; **Official Journal of the European Union**, December 16, 2004, no. 310, p. 191.
- 11 „EU Languages accord gives new hope for other languages, Press release, November 9, 2005, <http://www.e-f-a.org>.
- 12 Since the enlargement of May 2004 the EU has twenty official languages: Danish, German, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Dutch, Polish, Portuguese, Slovene, Slovak, Spanish, Czech and Swedish, European Commission, **Many tongues, one family: languages in the European Union**, Luxemburg, 2004, p. 4.
- 13 European Parliament, Debates, July 21, 2004, P6_CRE(2004)07-21.
- 14 "I will go along with Mr Borrell's proposal that we Catalans in the House should not speak our own language. [...] As a linguist, I would like to make known my strong opposition to the fact that Spain is calling for the EU's linguistic regime to include Catalan and Valencian as if these were two entirely different languages. Catalan is spoken from north to south, from Salses, in Roussillon, to Guardamar, south of Valencia, and from west to east, from Fraga, in the Autonomous Community of Aragon, to Alghero in Sardinia. To speak of Catalan and Valencian is to promote linguistic secessionism, which has long been one of the strategies of cultural destruction. As the Romans said, 'divide et impera!' which, translated into an official EU language, means 'divide and rule!'. If Europe is moving closer to an ever more effective unity, what point can there be in fragmenting both languages, which in actual fact are spoken across borders and other divisions? A Europe which does not give a voice to all its peoples will be an incomplete Europe. We have a great opportunity to build a true European federalism", European Parliament, Debates, September 15, 2004, P6_CRE(2004)09-15.
- 15 Turkey is not ready for Europe – Europe is not ready for Turkey, Press release, October 25, 2005, <http://www.e-f-a.org>.
- 16 European Parliament, Debates, December 13, 2004, P6_CRE(2004)12-13.
- 17 EFA solidarity one year after Madrid terror blasts, Press release, March 11, 2005, <http://www.e-f-a.org>.
- 18 EFA party in Slovak Republic banned, Press release, November 25, 2005, <http://www.e-f-a.org>.

Conclusion

In 1981, the initiative was taken to proceed with the official formation of the European Free Alliance. It was not by chance that this took place at that time. Even in the seventies, there was contact between individual regionalist and nationalist parties in Europe, although this did not go beyond the stage of informal contact. Lobbying was undertaken by, for example, the Bureau for Stateless European Nations, but it was only after the first direct European elections in 1979 that there was also an opportunity for these parties to make a difference at a European level. The Fleming Maurits Coppieters played a leading role in the emergence of this first formal transnational grouping of European regionalists and the democratic nationalists.

Since its formation in 1981, the EFA has gradually tried to expand as a European alliance, federation and, since 2004, political party by extending its ideology, changing the party's structures and, in particular, attracting new partners who are also opponents of an over-centralised Europe. In July 1981, nine partners signed the Declaration of the Convention of Brussels, thereby forming the EFA, which after 25 years was able to expand to become a group of 33 parties (of which 5 observers).¹ In particular the adhesion in 1989 of the Scottish National Party (SNP) and various parties in the state of Spain represented a strengthening of the EFA. The Volksunie was most certainly a driving force until halfway through the nineties, although the SNP was later to be an important factor as well. With the disappearance of the VU in 2001, there again arose the question of whether the regionalist and nationalist project would still continue to exist in the future (for the first time in 2004, no Flemish were elected for the EFA). It was found to be very difficult to develop contacts in the expansion countries. In Eastern Europe, the message of the EFA was one of a peaceful and democratic movement towards greater autonomy. It resulted in new members from Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

However, the drive to expand the EFA was not taken to extremes. This was quite literally the case. Extremist parties such as Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord and parties which employ and/or approve of violence such as Herri Batasuna were not welcome.

The steady growth of the EFA contrasted with the previous fluctuations in the level of representation in the European Parliament. Weak(er) sessions (1979-1984, 1984-1989, 1994-1999, 2004-date) alternated with periods when a significant number of seats were obtained (1984-1989, 1999-2004). Despite their difficult position in the European Parliament, the elected members of the EFA chose not to form part of the traditional, large

SMITH, Alyn
Glasgow, 1973)

Alyn Smith is one of EFA's newest MEPs, elected in 2004. He is the Scottish National Party's spokesman on Europe, the deputy spokesperson on International Relations and an active campaigner for Scottish independence.



Before becoming an MEP Alyn worked for the Scottish National Party in the newly formed Scottish Parliament at Holyrood. Prior to that Alyn trained and worked as a lawyer. He studied at Leeds and Heidelberg Universities and the College of Europe in Warsaw.

During Alyn's short time with the EFA in the European Parliament, he has played an active role. He is a member of the Committee on Regional Development and the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy and has also been on the Temporary Committee on Financial Perspectives – the EU Budget.

Alyn is also a member of the Parliament's delegation to Switzerland, Iceland and Norway. In the Parliament, Alyn has used his position as an MEP to highlight issues such as the global Make Poverty History campaign and Trade Justice.

As an SNP MEP, Alyn's main concerns within the Parliament are to ensure acknowledgement and co-operation with Scotland's devolved Parliament and to work towards a future with an independent Scotland taking a full part in the European Union as a fully fledged member state.

groups, but decided to follow their own, alternative course. With regard to this, the EFA has always been a collection of parties which places ideology above power.

In percentage and nominal terms, the EFA presence in the European Parliament has always been marginal: it has never exceeded 2 percent (see Annex 9). The fact that the EFA has never managed to form its own independent group in the European Parliament is both a reason for and a consequence of this. The second Rainbow Group (1989-1994) came closest to forming such a group, since the EFA MEPs amounted to 2/3 of the Group. However, it was never possible to build on this success, so that the Euro MPs were always to be found in another (technical) group. After Rainbow II, there was the European Radical Alliance (1994-1999) and, since then, EFA Euro MPs have sat in a group with the Greens.

One reason for the low presence in the European Parliament is the election procedures which apply in certain member states. It is possible to respond to this in different ways: either by not participating in the European elections, as is the case with the Frisian FNP, or by forming alliances with similar parties in the same region (PNV and EA in 1999), partners from other areas (the lists of candidates of *Europa de los Pueblos* in the Spanish state and *Federalismo* in Italy) or parties which belong to a different political family such as the Greens in France. However, some parties which manage to send one or more elected members to the European Parliament, join a group which offers them more in terms of authority and financial re-

sources. The fact that the regionalist and nationalist parties do not form a homogeneous group *in politicis*, which is the case with the Christian Democratic, Socialist, Liberal and Extreme Right families, is also not surprising. Party pressure can be another reason for not joining the EFA (cf. Ortuondo). In all this, account should be taken of the requirements of the European Parliament itself. A minimum number of members is required to form a group and this number has increased with the number of Euro MPs. In this way, joining with others has become a *conditio sine qua non* when it comes to 'surviving' in the European Parliament.

In several ways, EFA brought something new under the European constellation. Within the European Parliament, it has set itself up as the defender of the cultural individuality

of peoples, regions and stateless nations, and this is true throughout the world. The EFA has been particularly successful in this area. The nationalism of the EFA has always been a peaceful, democratic and pro-European nationalism in which the EFA has tried to ensure that the regions and stateless nations play a more important role in Europe, that is to say to bring about an integrated federalism. Central to this is the need for greater subsidiarity. Incidents in the European Parliament during the pioneering stage showed that this project could not rely on much support from a Europe of the member states. In this area, the EFA has been less successful: neither a two-chamber system nor greater power for the Committee of the Regions nor the access of the regions to the European Court of Justice has yet been achieved.

The EFA has also devoted itself to the provision of European help to economically weaker regions: the establishment of a European Fund for Regional Development has been of considerable importance here. The EFA wanted to prevent the emergence of a Europe which had poorer and richer regions. As far as the EFA was concerned, Europe was too preoccupied with the economy and too little attention was being paid to a social Europe. This was one of the reasons why it was difficult to accept the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992.

For the EFA, regionalism and nationalism has always been a major driving force. However, as an alliance, federation or party, it has included from day one other points in its programme. For example, sustainability has always been an important topic – not only as far as the environment and energy are concerned, but also with regard to peace. In this sense, joining forces with the Greens to form a single group (which has been the case since 1999) would appear to be a logical step. Also with regard to these topics, the EFA was ahead of its time, as can be seen from the presence of these topics in the programme even before the existence of the Green parties and the early realisation that dialogue between the two blocs previously separated by the Iron Curtain was necessary.

The parties which have come together under the umbrella of the EFA belong to a well-defined political family, but not in the same sense as the traditional groups (Christian Democrats, Liberals and Socialists). There is much agreement about some points and these are to be found in the election manifesto and the General Assembly of the party. However, it is not possible to stick a clear label on the parties: the Scots in the SNP



Tatjana ZDANOKA
(Riga, 1950)

MEP Tatjana Zdanoka is an individual member of the EFA. Currently a professor of mathematics, she started her political career in the late 1980s when she was elected an MP in Latvia.

Although a member of the Communist party, she challenged the mainstream political agenda. As a result, she was deprived of her political rights for a 10 year period by subsequent Latvian legislation and a court decision. She used this time to set up the Latvian Human Rights Committee which went on to provide free legal assistance to thousands of victims of State repression. The Committee prepared reports and applications to the international Human Rights organisations, thus promoting the gradual democratisation of Latvian society. In the mid-1990s Zdanoka founded a political party for the protection of ethnic minorities and socially disadvantaged groups in Latvia. In 2002 the party won one quarter of all seats in the Latvian Parliament. In 2004, the ECHR upheld the illegality of Latvian political sanctions against Tatjana Zdanoka. That same year the renowned leader of the Russian-speaking minority of Latvia was elected into the European Parliament.

MEP Tatjana Zdanoka sees her mission in the European Parliament in promoting human rights, an EU-wide policy of non-discrimination, as well as the use of regional and minority languages in the EU.

Bernat JOAN I MARI
(Balearic Islands)

Born in Eivissa in 1960. Has a PhD in Catalan Philology. A linguist. Taught Catalan Language and Literature at Santa Maria's High School and Sociolinguistics at ICE (an extension of the University of the Balearic Islands in Eivissa). He has written four novels, various essays about sociolinguistics and politics, and a dozen plays. He usually writes for the Catalan press and takes an active part in conferences on language policy, sociolinguistics, social psychology and sociology.



In 1993, he became a member of the ERC, after having been involved with the social movement for Catalan in his youth. He put himself forward as a candidate for the Spanish Senate. Later, he also appeared in the parliamentary elections for the Balearic Islands. In the European elections of 2004, he was elected on to the coalition list for **Europa de los Pueblos** (Europe of the Peoples).

would not accept being described as regionalists, while the Bretons in the UDB know better than to refer to themselves as nationalists in France. The majority of the EFA parties do not strive for full independence in Europe. With the exception of the SNP, Plaid Cymru and, since 1994, Ligue Savoisiennne, the desire of the majority is simply to have greater autonomy.

On the basis of the position which the party occupies on the political spectrum, the EFA can be described as progressive. Most EFA parties are and tend to be left of centre. This is certainly the case with parties such as UDB, Plaid Cymru and ERC. That is the reason for the objections of Plaid and UDB when Lega Nord came to swell the ranks of the EFA *in tempore non suspecto*. The Volksunie was more to the right of centre, although its Euro MPs came from the left wing of the VU. After the historic election defeat of 1994, the EFA tried in vain to expand by approaching centre parties such as the Dutch party D'66. Only the Portuguese PRD joined.

Except for some larger parties such as the SNP, ERC, BNG, EA, Plaid Cymru and VU, the EFA consisted mainly of small, sometimes

marginal parties. Most parties are successful in their own region or territorial entity. Some are also successful in the member state of which the region or territorial entity forms a part. However, it is often the case that these parties do not manage to achieve a breakthrough at a European level. For example, FNP achieves good results in Friesland, but has not been able to obtain a European seat because of the Dutch constituency regulations. The same applies to parties from the French regions. The small parties have remained in the EFA, as this has provided them with a forum for the discussion of their problems and has indirectly given them access to the European Parliament. Within the EFA, attempts have constantly been made to ensure the greater involvement of these parties: the composition of the Bureau is significant as far as this is concerned. There is a great degree of mutual solidarity within the umbrella organisation of the EFA.

In October 2004, the EFA was officially recognised as a European political party and, in November, new regulations were adopted at this General Assembly. At that time, it was the last stage in a long process of development from a fairly informal alliance through a federation to a European political party. Mutual solidarity between the members is now much greater and the financial commitments are more pressing (the cost of the activities of the EFA had previously been borne almost in full by the Euro MPs). And, although groups and parties are independent of each other, elected members of the EFA are normally expected to sit in the same group.

The formation of the EFA as a European political party in Barcelona was a powerful signal. Two weeks earlier, the nationalist ERC had won a victory over the PP of Prime Minister J.M. Aznar, who was not particularly keen on these parties. In a sense, the place was also a *lieu de mémoire* as the nationalist parties in Spain had not been allowed to exist under the Franco regime. The place of solemn signature, the Mies Van der Rohe Pavilion, in a way reflected the nature of the EFA as a political party: a style halfway between internationalism and regionalism.

As it exists now, the EFA continues to be a tool for parties which are not (able to be) represented in the European Parliament. Maurits Coppeters' words "*Je serai votre député à Bruxelles*" are still true. The transformation into a European political party has ensured that the interaction between the grass roots in the regions and the activities in the European Parliament is now better organised than ever.

In May 2006, the EFA celebrated its 25th anniversary in the European Parliament in Brussels. We conclude this history of the EFA's journey from Strasbourg to Brussels with a passage from *EFA News* of July-September 2003: "*Working within the EFA over the last two decades, we have been helping to forge what we consider to be an invaluable tool for building a different Europe and unifying our presence in our individual nations and regions under the European banner. Proceeding from the admittedly modest base offered by our representation in the European Parliament, we have been able to sow the seeds of a Europe-wide project and found the ways to lend our voice to the political, cultural, and social forces that have shared in the Europe of diversity.*"²

NOTES

1 Situation on January 1, 2006.

2 EFA-DPPE General Assembly [...], p. 1.

Abbreviations

ALE		Alliance libre européenne
AN		Alleanza Nazionale
BNG		Bloque Nacionalista Galego
CDC		Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya
ChA		Chunta Aragonesista
CIU		Convergencia i Union
DPPE-EFA		Democratic Party of the Peoples of Europe – European Free Alliance
EA		Eusko Alkartasuna
EC		European Community
ECSC		European Coal and Steel Community
EEC		European Economic Community
EFA		European Free Alliance
EFAY		European Free Alliance Youth
ELV		Elsass-Lothringischer Volksbund
EPP		European People’s Party
ERC		Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya
ETA		Euskadi Ta Askatasuna
EU		European Union
EURATOM		European Atomic Energy Community
FDJ		Front Démocratique Francophone
FN		Front National
FNP		Fryske Nasjonale Partij
FUEN		Federal Union of European Nationalities
IFF		Independent Fianna Fail
JERC		Joventuts d’Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya
LDK		Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës (Democratic League of Kosovo)
LL		Lega Lombarda

LN		Lega Nord
LS		Ligue Savoisiene
MEP		Member of European Parliament
MFP		Magyar Föderalista Part
MK		Mebyon Kernow
MSI		Movimento Sociale Italiano
N-VA		Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie
PA		Partido Andalucista
PAR		Partido Aragonés
PCTVL		Par cilv ka ties b m vienot Latvij
PDB		Partei der deutschsprachigen Belgier
PI		Partido per l'Independencia
PNG		Partido Nacionalista Galego
PNV		Partido Nacionalista Vasco
POBL		Parti pour l'Organisation de la Bretagne Libre
PoC		Parti Occitan
PRD		Partido Renovador Democrático
PSd'A		Partido Sardo d'Azione
RAS		Ruch Autonomii Slaska
RW		Rassemblement Wallon
SaV		Strollad ar Vro
SNP		Scottish National Party
SNS		Slovenská Národná Strana
SSW		Sydslesvigsk Vaelgerforening
SVP		Südtiroler Volkspartei
TCDI		Group for Technical Coordination and Defence of Independent Groupings and Members
UC		Unitat Catalana
UDB		Union démocratique bretonne
UPA		Union du Peuple Alsacien
UPC		Unione di Populu Corsu
UfS		Union für Südtirol
UV		Union Valdôtaine
VB		Vlaams Blok
VU		Volksunie
VUJO		Volksunie Jongeren
VVAP		Volem Viure al País

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- DA 64/8: European Community, regions
- DA24/2: Nations

Annexes



Annex 1

CHARTER OF COOPERATION FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A EUROPE OF THE NATIONS (CHARTER OF BRUSSELS),

signed in Brussels in June 1979 by: Volksunie, Partei der deutschsprachigen Belgier, Fryske Nasjonale Partij, Union Valdôtaine, Plaid Cymru, Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya, Elsass-Lothringischer Volksbund and Unione di Populu Corsu

Charter of cooperation for the construction of a Europe of the nations

Every nation in the world has the right to self-government, the right to preserve and develop its own identity and cultural heritage. Every nation must be able to decide on its own system of government.

Nationals are the natural communities in which people, as individuals and as members of society, can develop their potential to the full and have the opportunity to attain their objectives and defend their interests. Personal identity can only be safeguarded of the collective identity of the nation to which each person belongs is also safeguarded. This new humanism is the ethic on which our political convictions are based.

Peoples which do not constitute states in their own right have the right, nevertheless, to develop their own cultural identity. This right must be enshrined and safeguarded by the political entity to which they have freely chosen to belong.

Developments in science, technology and the economy mean that political decisions are being taken by larger and larger entities. This rapidly leads to a situation where the democracy and identity of nations and individuals are threatened.



The trend towards larger units must therefore be accompanied by a strengthening and highlighting of the identity of these natural communities.

A European authority therefore should not be a centralized bureaucratic machine, but a political structure resulting from a decision in which all peoples and individuals have had a say.

Instead of a monolithic and centrally-governed Europe we propose a Europe of the peoples, in which all peoples are equal and work freely together. These peoples should have the sovereign right to decide independently on their accession to international agreements.

Isolationism runs counter to our concept of nationalism. We declare our solidarity with all peoples of Europe and the world, in particular those who suffer under foreign and dictatorial domination and those who are on the road towards full development.



Annex 2

DECLARATION OF BASTIA.

signed in Bastia on August 19, 1979 by: Volksunie, Partei der deutschsprachigen Belgier, Fryske Nasjonale Partij, Union Valdôtaine, Plaid Cymru, Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya, Elsass-Lothringischer Volksbund, Unione di Populu Corsu and Partido Nacionalista Vasco

Declaration of Bastia. 19 August 1979

The participants in the International Congress of the 'Unione di Populu Corsu', meeting in Bastia on 17 August 1979,

1. Confirm their unanimous agreement to the European Charter of Peoples Without a State, drawn up in Brussels in preparation for the European elections of June 1979. They believe that the Charter is an antecedent of the future 'Declaration of the Rights of Peoples' which they desire to promote, draw up and present to the European institutions and the parliaments of the Member States.

For this purpose they resolve to set up in Brussels a permanent coordination and consultation organization open to all the movements and parties which subscribe to the idea of a Europe of Peoples.

In this context they have already made provision for annual meetings on national peoples' cultures, and a request is to be made in this connection for cooperation from the Council of Europe.



2. Also draw attention to the continuous violation of the Rights of Man inherent in the repression of Peoples struggling for recognition of their national identity and are resolved to step up their action to gain respect for freedom of political expression and for the ground-rules of democracy.

With this aim they intend to ask all international authorities to ensure that the Member States signatories of the various conventions in this field are obliged to observe those conventions.

3. Express their satisfaction at the important achievement represented by the acquisition by the Basque, Catalan and, before long, Galician peoples of autonomous statutes.

This is an incentive to those peoples which have not made so much progress as regards their own identity, and even more a commitment for all of them to continue their struggle in the context of the Europe of Peoples and international solidarity.

By their presence in Corsica they symbolize the openness and fraternal solidarity of the Mediterranean peoples towards the other peoples of the world which are striving for liberty and dignity.



Annex 3

DECLARATION OF THE CONVENTION OF BRUSSELS.

signed in Strasbourg on July 9, 1981 by: Volksunie, Elsass-Lothringischer Volksbund, Partei der deutschsprachigen Belgier, Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya, Unione di Populu Corsu, Strollad ar Vro, Fryske Nasjonale Partij, mr. Fernand Lebrat and mr. Neil T. Blaney (who was excused but signed the Declaration afterwards)

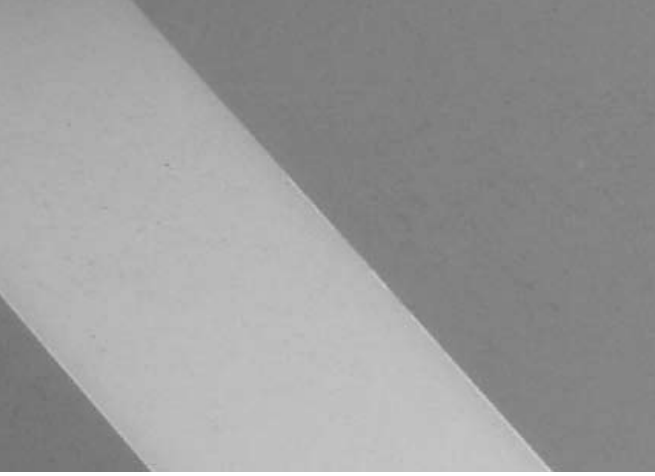
The European Free Alliance

The European Free Alliance is a cooperative association of political parties which, in contrast with established traditional patterns of political thought, advocate a form of integrated regionalism. This concept is based on meaningful interplay between the individual and national identity and is given structural form in a harmonious, democratic decision-making process on federal lines whereby decisions are taken at the lowest possible level and the greatest importance is attached to individuality. Social justice is one of its fundamental principles.

The following text sets out the guiding lines for cooperation between the EFA-partners.

It sets out and defines the common goal of these parties as the creation of a Europe of the peoples while respecting the individuality of each party.

In the text, the concepts of confederalism, regionalism, federalism and autonomy are all embraced by the term 'federalism'. The different parties are free to use these terms as they see it. The text constitutes the minimum program approved by the signatory parties. However, this does not prevent a party from giving greater emphasis to specific aspects of the program when placing it before its own public in its own region.



1. The EFA and Regionalism

1.1. The European Free Alliance is seeking a democratic social structure, based on the desire to develop freely and to build the structures necessary for this purpose.

1.2. In order to put this federalism into practice, both government and public authorities must be structured or transformed so as to enable the individual to realize to the fullest possible extent his own individuality and his place in society.

This realization of individuality must therefore be rooted in the fundamental recognition of the equality of all individuals. This implies positive respect for the individual's conception of life, his religious and philosophical beliefs in an active spirit of tolerance and with the guarantee that his personal lifestyle can be followed. Such respect is, moreover, conducive to the best interests of society and the cohesion of all its members.

1.3. The natural community in which the individual can fulfill himself is the ethnic community or, if the size of the ethnic community would put government too far away from the individual, the region. In any event this community must be characterized on the human level by a homogeneity of history or culture, or geography or economic life, or all of them together, which instils the population with a common sense of purpose in their search for common objectives and interests.

It is this common sense of purpose based on certain criteria which, though changing, are recognized as important by the community itself, that gives the community its identity, its desire to exist and to be considered as an entity. Under no circumstances must regional divisions be allowed to create barriers within such a community.

1.4. The only way to achieve a European dimension without losing sight of the human element is to build on the foundation of ethnic and regional communities. This implies that ultimately a two-fold process must take place: on the one hand, the creation of a supra-national political authority with its own European policy, and on the other the recognition of the autonomy of ethnic and regional communities.



1.5. The EFA rejects the Jacobin concept of a centralized and monolithic Europe. Our goal is a European fatherland, based on ethnic and regional communities which formally recognizes the rights of the small minorities that are unable to form federal states.

1.6. The building of Europe must therefore lead to the dismantling of existing nation-states, through a transfer of their powers to ethnic and regional communities on the one hand and to the European authority on the other. This shift of power must not be allowed to prejudice the social achievements of the least-favoured sectors of the population.

1.7. The EFA takes the view that Europe should not be limited to the European Community, which is merely the embryo of what Europe will eventually become. Cooperation between nations and peoples, governed according to the same democratic principles, is a starting point for the future construction of Europe.

1.8. European unity signifies a new opportunity and a new role for groupings and minorities which are now divided by national frontiers and are prevented thereby from fully realizing their individuality and cultural development.

1.9. Isolationism runs counter to our concept of federalism. EFA declares its solidarity with all peoples of Europe and the world, in particular those who suffer under foreign and dictatorial domination and those who are on the road towards full development. The EFA is therefore in favour of proper recognition of the fundamental rights of individuals and nations.

2. The European Free Alliance and Federalism

2.1. The essence of federalism is that decision-making should be as close as possible to those spheres of life where a person can best prove himself as an individual and in the group. Progress towards larger cooperative associations and administrative units and progress towards European unity must be achieved in a harmonious manner; true to federalist principles, for these have the greatest possible respect for diversity.



2.2. It is vitally important, in the view of the EFA, that policy at European level should concern itself only with problems that belong to that level, and not interfere in regional and local affairs which can best be dealt with at the regional and local level.

2.3. Viable communities constitute the smallest units of the European political edifice. In the Europe of the future the local authority will continue to be the true guardian of freedom and will safeguard the voice of the individual in the solution of local problems.

2.4. The next level in the political hierarchy is the ethnic community or region. It must have a democratic administration including its own assembly and an executive body accountable to this assembly. The autonomy of the ethnic and regional communities must extend to all the essential aspects of the life and development of communities. Agreements and disputes among the regions and between the regions and Europe as a whole must be settled through consultation and conciliation procedures. The regions must be geared as closely as possible to the needs of the cultural communities, for it is they that provide the richness of European diversity.

Ethnic and regional communities provide the new framework of European life. A network of free and flexible agreements must bind these communities to another.

2.5. At the top of the European political structure is the European authority, empowered to deal with all those problems which by their general or technical nature can only be solved in the broader European context. The EFA supports the two-chamber system. The First European Chamber would be composed of representatives directly elected by the European people according to a uniform and democratic electoral system. The Second European Chamber, with regional representation, would have to put ethnic and regional communities in a position to exert an influence on the construction and policies of Europe.

2.6. The EFA is fully aware that the federal construction of a democratic Europe of the people is a difficult and long-term undertaking. It is however the only alternative to the utopian idea that nation-states can progress towards a harmonious union by signing a few treaties. This ideal is one of the pillars on which the voluntary political cooperation



and great solidarity of the members of the European Free Alliance is based.

3. The European Free Alliance and Culture

3.1. Interregional agencies must be set up in which European peoples and minorities related by language and culture can coordinate their educational and cultural policy without interference. The European Parliament must establish structures which put an end to the repression of minority cultures and offer all ethnic communities an opportunity for full cultural development.

3.2. The European institutions must recognize the importance of the in the Treaty of Rome non-recognized languages as a valuable heritage and means of communication. The European institutions must provide for regional languages to be used as the medium of communication with these regions.

3.3. The ethnic communities and regions must break the monopoly of official state culture in the field of literature, broadcasting and film. The regionalization of media policy should put an end to the superficial and deadening influence exerted by centralized communication media.

3.4. Education is clearly a community or regional responsibility. All education must be designed to equip the individual for self-determination and self-fulfillment in and with society. Interregional and preferably European cooperation is obviously necessary for the mutual recognition of diplomas, post-graduate qualifications and advanced technological research.



4. The Social Idea of the EFA

4.1. The member parties of the EFA stand for progressive social justice. This means the strive after a fair distribution of knowledge, ownership and power, as well as an appreciation of personal creativity, enterprise and intellectual freedom. Our concept of justice dictates that we apply radical principles of justice to all conflicts of interest in society. This is why we reject antiquated political ideas: egoistic liberalism, which leaves the poor and the weak oppressed, dogmatic collectivism which engulfs human creativity through bureaucracy and kills enterprise and paternalistic solidarism which, preaching solidarity, leaves injustice and privileges untouched.

In place of both new and inherited privileges and of the injustices perpetuated by our system of distribution in society, the EFA proposes an equitable distribution of income and wealth. Our first concern in this area must be for the under-privileged and less fortunate in our society.

4.2. In the present socio-economic situation, characterized by both high unemployment and rapid technological progress, the winning of the right to work, the humanisation of work, fresh emphasis on the importance of handicrafts and craft trades and the creation of a new attitude to work are challenges to which we must find a response. The redistribution of work and creation of new jobs are absolute priorities. The application of this principle should not be confined by reducing the number of working hours per day or per week, but must be viewed in the broader context of a new pattern of society.

4.3. The EFA wants priority to be given to the creation of jobs. Providing employment in the worker's locality is a key element of such a policy. Workers are not commodities which can be moved around arbitrarily: on the contrary, industry must move to areas where the necessary labour is available.

The Social and Regional Funds should both be used to achieve this aim. The EFA advocates the use of the Social Fund for regionalization. The conversion policy must derive



its impetus primarily from the autonomy of the regions; it is logical therefore, that the Social Fund should support the regions in this effort.

4.4. In a consultive democracy agencies must be set up for cooperation and consultation between genuinely European social partners, the regions and the European authority.

4.5. In dealing with the unavoidable conflicts of interest, the needs of the community always take precedence over those of the individual or group. For the sake of solidarity, solutions to conflicts must be sought through consultation and cooperation, with special concern for weaker groups and non-organized interests.

4.6. The EFA upholds the principle of solidarity with the developing countries. The people of the Third World have to be helped in their struggle for independence and social justice. An equitable distribution of labour on global scale, as well as fair remuneration for labour and raw materials are preconditions for the securing of world peace.

4.7. The EFA believes in the value of pacifism and wishes to see the gradual dismantling and transformation of the arms industry and the military machine. Mindful of the 'no more war' slogans of those who have fought at the front, it will campaign actively for total disarmament and the dismantling of military power blocs.

Nuclear arms are seen by the EFA as a threat to the existence of mankind and as such an absolute evil which must be resisted by all means.

5. The European Free Alliance and the Economy

5.1. The European federal authority has particular responsibility for helping less-favoured regions to achieve equality. The free movement of persons and goods and freedom of establishment have all too often been accompanied by irresponsible depopulation of deprived areas and excessive concentration of resources in industrial regions.



The highest priority must be the reorientation of European policy towards social and regional policy using the funds provided for this purpose. The EFA rejects the protectionism of the member States and the egoistic demands for 'fair returns' from community contributions.

5.2. Although the European Community's Institutions have clearly demonstrated their international value, they were conceived from a too one-sidedly economic philosophy according to which size and centralization are the only path to salvation. This has led to the pursuit of harmful agricultural policy geared to large scale monocrop production and the strengthening of the multinational food and feed undertakings, to increasing servitude to multinational companies rather than increased democratic and social control over them and to an all too docile attitude toward new economic lobbies, e.g. the nuclear holding companies that can only function when there is considerable concentration of financial resources.

In contrast to this belief in growth by means of largescale concentration, the EFA advocates a new life-style that attaches more importance to well-being and health than to production and technical progress not aimed at satisfying genuine welfare needs. The EFA therefore wants to ensure that the economy, living conditions and social intercourse preserve their vital links with man and nature.

This approach which is based on man and his natural and social environment, can only come to fruition in a responsible manner of economic activity is systematically accompanied by non-bureaucratic but transparent federally structured instruments. These instruments are the regional authorities, interregional consultative bodies, and international institutions, with the European Community occupying a position of great importance. The laws of the free market economy can this be corrected, as may be felt appropriate, through the variety of official instruments.

5.3. Curbing the power of the nation-state and strengthening regionalization are the best ways of calling an effective halt to support for lame-duck companies whose products disrupt the free market economy and endanger the future of economically viable undertakings. A regional economic policy could both enhance market transparency and add weight to the European authorities' powers of intervention. The system of subsidies and



facilities provided for setting up industrial companies must be brought to an end and used to strengthening the regional authority.

The same authority could more effectively assume responsibility for equalizing the competitiveness of farms and promoting agriculture based on the family farm. Active promotion of regional balance is required using the European Agricultural Fund with assistance from the European Social Fund.

This regional authority would also be the ideal agent for stimulating small and medium-sized undertakings and enable them to overcome their handicap in relation to the big economic groupings.

5.4. The regional authority must be in a position to hold institutionalized consultation and to conclude agreements on economic and environmental problems which transcend the regional context and are shared by neighbouring regions.

Such consultation must lead to macro-economic cooperation.

5.5. In order to come to terms with the drastic changes taking place in the world, European economic policy must be geared primarily to programming in those sectors where only a European approach will work, e.g. steel, textiles, ship-building, and to joint infrastructure arrangements, i.e. for shipping and transport.

5.6. The European Parliament must be given power to call the Commission and Council to account, should the provisions of the Treaty concerning the free movement of goods not be respected.

5.7. The EFA wishes to see an expansion of the Treaty Law of the European Communities. The problems of multinational undertakings could be included by means of a code of conduct and a European legal statute. An environmental code should also be included to supplement Treaty law.

5.8. To reduce Europe's vulnerability in this area a policy of diversification of energy sources is required.



Research into the application of soft or alternative energy sources needs to be expedited. A strict European security programme is needed, covering both the siting and operation of nuclear plants and nuclear waste disposal. Moreover, the EFA advocates the implementation of a moratorium on nuclear energy.

5.9. The introduction of a European Monetary System, and eventually a European currency is a measure which will not only stimulate the economy but also contribute to greater social justice. The firm economic foundations which must support European monetary union will be possible only when the regions within Europe are in balance.

5.10. VAT rates and tax reduction arrangements must be harmonized and a European Monetary Union introduced before duties and quotas can finally be abolished.

6. The European Free Alliance and the World

6.1. The federal construction of Europe is an essential contribution to the problem of a world order.

6.2. The Europe of the Peoples must be the fatherland of all the ethnic and regional communities that belong to the European historical and cultural tradition. This implies that close contacts must also be sought with the people living in the states of eastern Europe, to prepare their eventual integration into the Europe of the peoples and to prevent the existing pattern of blocs leading to a further alienation of these peoples.

6.3. The Europe of the Peoples should not be allowed to become yet another power bloc. On the contrary, European policy must essentially be aimed at promoting peace, through a constructive approach to the problems of underdevelopment, the international decision of labour and world-wide cooperation.



Annex 4

MANIFESTO OF GUERNIKA, JUNE 12, 1988

Manifiesto de la A.L.E. en Gernika

Los partidos de la Alianza Libre Europea – Grupo Arco Iris del Parlamento Europeo, nos reunimos con emoción bajo el Arbol de Gernika.

Para nosotros, flamencos, sardos, galeses, irlandeses, escoceses, corsos, occitanos, bretones, valdotanos, friulis, frisonos, eslovenos, belga-alemanes, catalanes, gallegos o vascos, para tantos otros pueblos hermanos de Europa, el Arbol de Gernika no es sólo símbolo de las libertades de Euskadi: es también expresión de solidaridad internacional, reivindicación de paz y bandera de libertad para cada uno de nuestros pueblos. Cuando el himno del Arbol de Gernika dice “Extiende tus frutos por el mundo”, nosotros, representantes de pueblos europeos sin estado, que agrupan a más de cuarenta millones de ciudadanos, asumimos gozosos ese mensaje de solidaridad y nos comprometemos en la tarea ilusionada de construir un mundo más

Manifesto of the EFA in Gernika

The parties of the European Free Alliance - Rainbow Group in the European Parliament, staged an emotional gathering under the Gernika tree. To us, Flemings, Sardinians, Welsh, Irish, Scots, Corsicans, Occitans, Brittons, Valdotaines, Friulians, Frisians, Slovenes, Belgian-Germans, Catalans, Galicians or Basques, and to so many other fraternal peoples of Europe, the Gernika tree is not only a symbol of the liberties of the Basque Country: it is also the expression of international solidarity, a vindication of peace, flying the flag of freedom for each of our peoples. When the hymn of the Gernika tree says “spread your fruits across the world”, we, representing the stateless peoples of Europe, numbering well over forty million citizens, wholly and joyfully assent to this message of solidarity. We are committed to the task to build a fairer, freer world with more solidarity, starting with our “old” Europe.



justo, más libre y solidario, empezando por nuestra vieja Europa.

La Europa de los Pueblos

Los partidos de la Alianza Libre Europea defendemos el derecho al autogobierno de nuestros pueblos y denunciamos con energía la falta de reconocimiento práctico del derecho a nuestra libre determinación, a pesar de los convenios internacionales que reconocen tal derecho, suscritos por los estados. Denunciamos, muy en especial, las situaciones de opresión cultural y lingüística que padecen muchos de nuestros pueblos y exigimos la inmediata aplicación en toda Europa de un estatuto de las lenguas minoritarias en los términos del informe de nuestro compañero Kuipers, aprobado por el Parlamento Europeo.

Pero nuestra reivindicación de autogobierno y la exigencia de respeto a nuestra lengua y cultura no significan que deseemos establecer nuevas fronteras en Europa.

Muy al contrario, apostamos firmemente por la construcción política de Europa y la superación de las fronteras existentes. Fronteras que, en algunos casos, dividen a nuestros propios pueblos. Apostamos por

The Europe of the Peoples

The parties of the European Free Alliance uphold the right to self-government of our peoples and we vigorously denounce the lack of any form of recognition in a practical sense of the right to self-determination, in spite of the international treaties that recognise this right as subscribed to by the national states. In particular, we denounce existing situations of cultural and linguistic oppression under which many of our peoples suffer and we demand the immediate application in all of Europe of a statute on minority languages in the terms of the report of colleague Kuipers, as approved by the European Parliament.

But our vindication of self-government and the exigency of respect for our languages and cultures does not mean we are seeking to establish new borders in Europe.

On the contrary, we firmly opt for the political construction of Europe and the transcending of the existing borders. Borders which, in some cases, divide our own peoples. We opt for a European federation made up of free peoples, associated in solidarity; and in this concert of nations, we do not forget the fraternal peoples of



una federación Europea hecha de pueblos libres y solidariamente asociados; y en este concierto de naciones, no olvidamos a los pueblos hermanos del este europeo, con los que propugnamos una aproximación, a partir de un clima de paz, distensión y respeto a los derechos humanos.

Para la Alianza Libre Europea, la Comunidad Europea actual hecha por los Estados, sólo puede considerarse el embrión de la futura Unión Europea que debe extenderse a todas las naciones gobernadas por principios democráticos.

Pero esa Unión Europea sólo será consistente si reconoce las realidades nacionales ocultas muchas veces por Estados plurinacionales. En el futuro, el protagonismo debe pasar de los estados actuales a los pueblos y comunidades naturales, y ello requiere la transferencia progresiva de poderes y competencias, por una lado a tales comunidades, y por otro, y en lo que éstas no puedan gestionar por sí mismas, a la Unión Europea.

Un proceso histórico

Somos conscientes de que éste es un largo y difícil proceso. No ignoramos las resistencias de los estados y los grandes

Eastern Europe with whom we jointly advocate an approach working towards a climate of peace, détente and respect for human rights.

For the European Free Alliance, the current European Community made up of the States, can only be considered as the embryo of any future European Union which is to be extended to include all the nations governed by democratic principles.

But this European Union will only be consistent with its self-stated goals if it duly recognises the national realities that often go shrouded under the cover of pluri-national states. In the future, the centre of focus of policymaking must transfer from the current states to the peoples and natural communities as the leading protagonists. This requires the progressive transference of powers and competences to said communities and - in as far as these communities are unable to manage certain policy areas themselves - to the European Union.

An historical process

We are aware that this is a long and difficult process. Nor can we ignore the



partidos, sus brazos conservadores, ante esta transformación. Pero, como han señalado insignes europeístas, es preciso considerar un doble proceso: La actual Europa de los estados llegará a cristalizar en un orden federal, pero, al mismo tiempo deberá emprenderse un proceso “desagregativo” que sustituya progresivamente la presencia monopolizadora de los estados por el protagonismo de los pueblos.

La Alianza Libre Europea trabajará para que las Instituciones Europeas vayan asumiendo estos principios. Constatamos que apenas comienza a estudiarse hoy la presencia de nuestras comunidades en dichas Instituciones. Pero objetivos como la creación de una segunda cámara de las nacionalidades y pueblos de Europa son ya objeto de discusión, y constituyen para la ALE uno de los pasos previos a la construcción política de la Europa de los Pueblos.

El Acta Unica Europea no puede servir solamente para hacer realidad el mercado interior. Debería contribuir, ante todo, a crear una sociedad internacional más justa y solidaria reduciendo las desigualdades entre los pueblos y generando una auténtica cohesión política y social.

opposition from the states and the major political parties to this transformation. But, as indicated by leading pro-European activists, this transformation must be considered as a twofold process: the current Europe of the states will crystallise in a federal order, but, at the same time a “des-aggregative” process is to get underway that is to progressively replace the state as a monopolising presence by the peoples as the prime protagonists

The European Free Alliance will work towards the acceptance and due endorsement of these principles by the European Institutions. The very presence of our communities in the Institutions is barely starting to become the topic of study. But objectives such as the creation of a second chamber of nationalities and peoples of Europe are already under discussion. To EFA, this constitutes one of the steps detailed above, on the way towards the political construction that is to become the Europe of the Peoples.

The Single European Act cannot solely serve to turn the internal market into reality. Before anything else, the Single European Act should rightly be expected to create an international society that is fairer, cementing increased solidarity between



Suprimir las aduanas para favorecer el comercio, y mantenerlas para dividir espacios culturales resultaría una triste ironía. La Alianza Libre Europea insta especialmente a la Comunidad Europea y a los Estados a romper las fronteras que dividen aún pueblos con una misma cultura para que puedan desarrollar conjuntamente su personalidad, enriqueciendo el acervo cultural de Europa.

La A.L.E. y la paz

Los partidos integrantes de la Alianza Libre Europea reafirmamos nuestra apuesta por la paz, tanto en el empeño para lograr las libertades de nuestros pueblos, como en las relaciones internacionales.

Rechazamos el recurso a la violencia y el terrorismo aunque invoque objetivos políticos. Pero denunciamos, al mismo tiempo con energía, las situaciones de violencia institucional y, muy particularmente, el desprecio a los derechos colectivos de las comunidades naturales en estados considerados democráticos.

Nuestra preocupación por la paz desborda el ámbito de nuestros pueblos. Rechazamos la actual política de bloques y la misma tentación de convertir la Unión Eu-

the nations of Europe and reducing the inequalities that exist between the peoples in order to generate genuine political and social cohesion.

Suppressing local and regional customs to favour trade, and maintaining existing divisive elements to divide cultural spaces would be a sad irony. The European Free Alliance is specifically urging the European Community and the Member States to break down the borders that continue to divide peoples that share the same culture. Tearing down existing borders would enable these peoples to jointly develop their own distinctive character, thereby enriching the cultural “*acquis communautaire*” in the process.

EFA and peace

The parties united under the European Free Alliance reaffirm their support for peace, through their sustained insistence on putting into effect the liberties of their peoples and in international relations.

We refute the use of violence and terrorism, even if those resorting to violence and terrorism assert political goals in justification. But by the same token, and with equal vigour, we denounce existing situa-



ropea en otro bloque de poder. Por el contrario, propugnamos el desmantelamiento de los arsenales militares, especialmente la nucleares desde el Atlántico a los Urales, la aproximación a los países neutrales y a la Europa del Este, y la cooperación de cidida con el tercer mundo, desde la convicción de que sólo un gran esfuerzo de solidaridad internacional establecerá bases firmes para la paz.

Bajo el Arbol de Gernika, símbolo de paz y libertad, los partidos de la A.L.E. nos comprometemos solemnemente a defender estos principios.

Viva la Alianza Libre Europea.

*ÐONOSTIA GERNIKA,
12 Junio de 1.988*

tions of institutional violence and, particularly, the derision and disregard of the collective rights of the natural communities in states considered as democratic.

Our concern for peace transcends the scope of our peoples. We refute the current policy of blocks and the temptation to turn the European Union into another power block. On the contrary, we advocate the dismantling of the military weapon stocks and, especially the nuclear arsenals from the Atlantic to the Urals. We champion the rapprochement to neutral countries and Eastern Europe, and solid and genuine cooperation with the Third World, setting out from the firm belief that only major efforts and a show of international solidarity will establish a solid basis for peace.

Under the Gernika tree, the symbol of peace and freedom, the parties of EFA solemnly affirm their commitment to defend and uphold these principles.

Long live the European Free Alliance.

*GERNIKA,
12 June 1988*



Annex 5

DECLARATION OF BRUSSELS, NOVEMBER 9, 2000

Declaration of Brussels of 9 November 2000 on nations and regions in the governance of Europe

A Plea for Stateless Nations

We who participate in EFA/DPPE call for full and fair recognition of the stateless nations of Europe in the evolving constitution of the European Union.

Principles of Democratic Nationalism

Democracy is the fundamental instrument for tackling the new challenges of our present-day societies. The European Free Alliance-Democratic Party of the Peoples of Europe (EFA-DPPE) wants to be in the vanguard of remedying democratic deficits, whether they are cultural, social, economic or ecological, whether European or worldwide.

Not all contemporary European states are 'nations'. Some are composite entities made up of several nations. These internal nations are sometimes called 'stateless nations' (or component nations and nationalities, federated states, autonomous communities, regions).

EFA-DPPE assembles political parties involved in the quest for enhanced self-government for our stateless nations.



Our progressive ‘nationalism’ (in some linguistic or political traditions ‘regionalism’ is a preferable term) has several characteristics that we consider essential:

- It is **democratic** and **constitutionalist** even though constitutional arrangements in many states effectively disadvantage our parties and their policies;
- It is committed to **social justice** and the **respect for equality and for human rights and the rights of minorities** and it is resolutely **opposed to racism and xenophobia** of any kind;
- It is **universalistic** in asserting those rights to communal self-determination that are open in principle to all people ;
- It is **contextualist** in holding that rights to self-government of stateless nations do not necessarily imply any single model of constitutional development as ideal for all cases ;
- It is **civic and inclusive** in seeking to identify the relevant national communities around common civil institutions rather than supposed ethnicity or blood ties ;
- It is committed to **sustainable development** and **respect for cultural and ecological diversity**;
- It is committed exclusively to peaceful means in the pursuit of political objectives.

Shared Sovereignty

EFA-DPPE argues that stateless nations have the right of self-government and of participation in the world and in the European Union on equal terms with other nationalities, some of which are the possessors of complete states, others not. **The recognition of such nations and of this inclusive and civic nationalism is fully compatible with and even assisted by the process of greater integration in Europe.**

It is necessary for the states and also for the European Union to explicitly acknowledge the existence of stateless nations. Sharing sovereignty is an appropriate form of acknowledgement. It is imperative that, on the occasion of the present IGC and of the future constitutional process of the EU, the question of allocation of responsibilities between different levels of government be effectively posed. Such an exercise would enhance trans-



parency and would contribute to a more satisfactory implementation of the principle of subsidiarity.

Effective operation of the subsidiarity principle

The case that EFA-DPPE makes on behalf of stateless nations clearly draws strong support from the principle of subsidiarity which it interprets extensively as the essential instrument to justify bringing decision-making closer to the level of the citizens. Bringing the administration closer to the entity administered is a sound principle in the organization of any governmental or managerial activity.

The present idea of subsidiarity in the EC Treaty is commonly interpreted as regulating only relations between Union and states. If subsidiarity is really an operative principle of the Union's constitution, then it must operate at all levels, with direct effect. This means that the democratic partnership among the various tiers of government (EU, Member States and their component parts that enjoy constitutional self-government) must be guaranteed in the EU constitution. It also means that there must be a right to effective participation in EU institutions by all the communities and countries of Europe.

EFA-DPPE therefore proposes that, in accordance with the subsidiarity principle and the political and national diversity of the European Union and as outlined in the resolution of the European Parliament of 26 October 2000 on better lawmaking, **the amendments made to the Treaties should specifically include recognition of, and respect for, the political and legislative powers of the Member States' internal political units (component nations and nationalities, federated states, autonomous communities, regions) in their executive, legislative and judicial relations with the EU institutions.**

The Commission must also address this issue while preparing its White Paper on the Governance of Europe.



Direct Presence in Europe

The direct presence of stateless nations in the institutions of the European Union is perfectly reasonable and lawful. **It is necessary to review and make compulsory the mechanisms that may enable such presence in the Council and in Coreper** and its preparatory committees and working groups by amending Article 203 of the EC Treaty.

EFA/DPPE also emphasises that **all states, regardless of size, should retain the right to nominate a Commissioner.**

EFA/DPPE regards **the involvement of the national and regional parliaments in the European decision-making process** by means of the scrutiny of EU legislation and of the actions of their Member State governments in the Council as vital, precisely with a view to the implementation of the subsidiarity principle.

European Electoral Constituency for each stateless nation

A key element in building a Europe of nations will be to ensure adequate self-representation of each nation, not only of states en bloc. In order to preserve the legitimacy of the European Parliament and the sense of belonging to the EU of the peoples it represents, **the composition of the European Parliament must ensure that the peoples of the smallest states of the Union and also internal constitutional political entities are represented in a way suited to guaranteeing political pluralism.** Should the number of Member States exceed 20, the maximum number of MEPs should be increased and the allocation of seats should be reconsidered on the basis either of an extrapolation of the current allocation scheme or of degressive proportionality.

EFA/DPPE also strongly supports **a reform of electoral laws to ensure that internal nations constitute separate electoral constituencies** with their own elected MEPs. The European electoral map should be reformed to match the territorial framework of the nations, whether genuine nation states, or stateless nations. Furthermore fair and proportional access to the media in the context of electoral campaigns has to be guaranteed.



In any case, the possibility of lists corresponding to a single European constituency has to lead to a corresponding increase of the number of MEPs.

Further democratisation of the European decision-making process would call for a **more radical reform, with legislative power vested in two chambers, the European Parliament and a reformed Council that would subsume some aspects of the present Committee of the Regions**, consistently with sustaining the essentially confederal character of the European Union. There should be provision as soon as possible for federal and quasi-federal Member States to share out their votes in the Council among their federated entities. The regional dimension of European governance must develop in such a way as to be rooted in a genuine regional democracy, by contrast with the state-dominated character of the present Committee of the Regions.

The promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity

Notwithstanding the contemporary thrust towards globalization of markets, communication systems and the economy as a whole, in the European Union the institutional and cultural embedding of the economy differs from one Member State to the next and in most countries also from one region to the next. Indeed it is this diversity that is so specific to Europe. At the same time it is an important competitive asset. Not just for each region by itself, which can boost its economic success by means of an efficient institutional environment, but also for the EU as a whole, because the regions can learn from each other and best practices can serve as models. So **the European Union has to preserve and promote the rich quality of the different cultures and languages existing within the Union.**

Broader recognition of the language-diversity of the stateless nations is necessary to give full respect to languages other than official state languages. That would in essence imply the acceptance by the EU of the different languages that have been officially acknowledged by the Member States and their internal nations or regions at the same level as the official EU languages.



EU policies also have to respect the cultural diversity of the audiovisual systems of the stateless nations.

Human Rights

Such acknowledgement of linguistic and cultural diversity has very deep roots in the endorsement and development of human rights.

EFA/DPPE are committed to work towards the consolidation of human rights in their own stateless nations and states and by extension to the European Union and the whole world. **EFA/DPPE therefore welcomes the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and calls upon the IGC to decide that the EU can ratify the European Convention of Human Rights.**

EFA/DPPE considers the principle of democratic governance and respect of human rights as the main criteria for admission and membership of the EU. States must examine their own constitutions and government practices to eliminate any surviving elements of cultural repression inherited from an imperialistic past.

EFA/DPPE also aims at **rectifying the imbalance between the importance given to the “free enterprise” clauses of the EC Treaty and those dealing with social well being of Europe’s citizens.** It takes seriously the problem of poverty in countries beyond the EU and expresses **strong solidarity with the developing countries**, including particular responsibility for ACP countries.

Constitutional pluralism

EFA/DPPE wants the post Nice EU constitutional process to embrace constitutional pluralism.



Where there is a plurality of institutional normative orders, each with a functioning constitution, it is possible that each acknowledge the legitimacy of every other within its own sphere, while none asserts or acknowledges constitutional superiority over another.

In this sense, **the EU, the Member States and their component parts enjoying constitutional autonomy form interacting systems with non-hierarchical ranking between them and a European constitution ought not to be considered as the source of authority or legitimacy of the Member States, whose constitutions must remain fundamental from the viewpoint of each national legal order.**



Annex 6

EFA MANIFESTO FOR THE JUNE 2004 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

European Free Alliance (EFA). Manifesto for the June 2004 European elections.

Sovereignty. Social Justice. Subsidiarity

Towards a Europe of diversity

The European Free Alliance has been standing up for the rights of stateless nations, peoples and regions for decades. Democratic legitimacy makes our cause unstoppable. To fully realise our historic rights and improve the social well being of our citizens and the economies of our countries we need to be fully represented in Europe.

The age of the traditional sovereign state is over. But we reject as its replacement a monolithic EU, with power in the hands of the largest member states. The challenge now is to achieve an ever broader participation of all peoples in the political process. Political devolution, leading to self-government and the recognition of particular identities, is the natural synthesis for our political struggle.

In these elections EFA will campaign for our countries to be better represented in Europe. We work on two fronts. Our representatives are committed to putting forward progressive policies. We work for improved social conditions, quality of life, and a fair redistribution of wealth. We also champion the principle of sustainable development as the vehicle to deliver improvements in people's quality of life within a clean environment. Our ideology is in line with people's desire to build a better world for present and future generations. But our countries' current constitutional status means that we lack the level of representation that other countries enjoy in Europe. As a result we risk being left behind when Europe makes vital decisions that affect all our futures. This is undemocratic and we



are working for reform. This is also why we operate, beyond the state level, on a national and regional level, fighting for proper representation for the stateless nations and peoples of Europe at every level of government.

EFA comprises stateless nations and territorial entities with a strong sense of identity that want a proper voice in Europe. Our member parties are:

Bloque Nacionalista Galego
Chunta Aragonesista
Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya
Eusko Alkartasuna
Fryske Nasjonale Partij
Libertà Emiliana-Nazione Emilia
Liga Fronte Veneto
Ligue Savoisiene
Lithuanian Polish People's Party
Mebbyon Kernow
Mouvement Région Savoie
Partei der Deutschsprachigen Belgier
Partido Andalucista
Partit Occitan
Partito Sardo d'Azione
Partitu di a Nazione Corsa
Plaid Cymru-the Party of Wales
Rainbow-Vinozhito
Scottish National Part,
Silesian Autonomy Movement
Slovenska Skupnost
Spirit
Union Démocratique Bretonne
Union du Peuple Alsacien
Union für Südtirol



Union Valdôtaine
Unitat Catalana

(Observer parties:

Hungarian Federalist Party

Moravian Democratic Party

Partido Nacionalista Vasco

Partit Socialista de Mallorca i Menorca-Entesa Nacionalista

Transilvanian Party)

In the 1999-2004 legislature our 9 MEPs have been working hard in the European Parliament (Scottish, Welsh, Flemish, Basques, Galicians, Catalans and Andalusians). Through a parliamentary alliance with the Greens we established a significant presence in parliament.

With your vote we will continue to champion the following critical issues at the European Parliament:

(a) EU Institutions should be simplified and democratised in a bicameral structure: European Parliament (directly elected by the European citizens) and the Council or Senate (composed of representatives of self-governing territorial entities). This Senate, the successor of the Council, transformed into a territorial chamber, would legislate by co-decision with the EP. The latter would appoint the Commission and would be able to instigate impeachment proceedings. This structure would facilitate the process of internal enlargement through self-determination. In the meantime EFA advocates full participation for our devolved governments in the Council of Ministers. Our countries should also have access to the Court of Justice.

(b) Constitutional Pluralism. The different levels of government, EU, States, Self-governing Countries, Regions, Cities etc, shall have different fields of competence with equal co-operation, and without hierarchy. This would be a network of governance.



(c) All languages have the right to be recognised at the European level, with no artificial difference between state languages and other languages. EFA will strive for the meaningful realisation of European cultural and linguistic diversity and equality of all European languages. To this end EFA will work for the establishment of legally binding instruments and budgets for the promotion, development and normalisation of Europe's minoritised and stateless languages.

(d) Control and management of structural funds to be given to the devolved authorities.

(e) Freedom to develop inter-regional and cross-border co-operation free from the interference of the States. Development of the Euroregions (European regions that transcend Member State borders)

(f) Solidarity, equality and the social well being of its citizens must underpin all EU policies. EFA is committed to social cohesion and the welfare state and feels it necessary that the EU should establish minimum social standards.

(g) Full employment and harmonisation of workers' rights which have been cut back through the Neo-Liberalism policies.

(h) Equal rights and an end to discrimination based on ethnic origin, gender, religion, language, age or sexual orientation.

(i) A radical switch in the CAP. Big agricultural producers are swallowing most of the EU budget. EU money should be directed to small producers, family farms and fishing communities securing vitality and a future for rural communities. Sustainable agriculture and extensive farming would flourish, countering the present threats to food quality.

(j) Support for the polluter pays principle in environmental protection. With regard to water, the way forward is the rationalisation of its use while avoiding disrupting the natural flow of this vital resource. It is time to put an end to nuclear energy. It is dange-



rous and follows a centralised pattern of creation and distribution. Investing in renewable sources will improve our environment and help local economies gain control over their own resources.

(k) Support for a common foreign policy for the EU. Security, defence and diplomacy must come together in a common EU body acting for a multipolar world united against war and fighting hunger and injustice which are the main root causes of most conflicts.

(l) Support for a peacekeeping role for the European Union when conflicts arise within and outside its borders.

(m) More transparency and openness in the way the EU conducts its business.

We have a vision of a harmonious Europe made up of diverse peoples helping each other in a spirit of co-operation. We want to protect our rich diversity while taking advantage of what a bigger union has to offer. The political tool to do this is subsidiarity, bringing decision making closer to the citizen. We need a fair and flexible distribution of responsibilities under the banner of shared sovereignty. The way forward is the construction of an interconnected system where everybody has a say. We advocate effective, co-operative bilateral relations between the EU and self governing states and entities with respect for the principle of self determination.

Our priority is defending the rights of the citizens Europe to determine their own future and live in a peaceful, democratic and diverse society.

I - Europe of Diversity

(A multicultural Europe of peoples, languages, and identities)

The European Union needs to integrate into its institutional framework the reality of the territorial entities with political and legislative powers. To be a state cannot be the only condition for the recognition of political representation at the European level. The enlar-



gement process, with more than ten new member states entering the European Union, most of them small countries, will reinforce this contradiction. If the only guarantee for political existence at the European level is “statality”, the only possibility given to stateless nations to be recognised at the European level will be to become an independent state in the framework of the European Union.

The European Union has to recognise and put into practice “unity in diversity”, respecting the reality of its different peoples and, in particular, the stateless nations and regions which have their own languages, history, economic and social characteristics and political aspirations. The European Union has to overcome the centralistic and technocratic mentality and practises of the States that still predominate in the European political arena.

Broader recognition of the linguistic diversity of the stateless nations and regions is essential to give full respect to languages other than official state languages. That would in essence imply the acceptance by the EU of the different languages that have been officially acknowledged by the Member States and their internal nations or regions at the same level as EU languages. EU policies also have to respect the cultural diversity of TV and radio in the stateless nations.

II - Europe of the citizens

(democracy, social dimension, rights)

New forms of popular participation and strengthening democracy

Democratic participation has to be strengthened. For that reason, the following measures to help increase popular participation are proposed:

1. Encourage direct forms of participation in addition to the election of representatives to the legislative members: referenda, assemblies, etc.
2. Promote citizen involvement at all levels.



3. Develop educational systems which encourage public involvement in public affairs.
4. Bring the activities of pressure groups and lobbyists under control.
5. Ensure that the media, particularly those in public ownership, are open to and reflect the plural nature of society.
6. Promote electoral systems which encourage involvement and ensure that parliaments are as representative as possible.
7. Direct access to information for all citizens' initiatives concerning European discussions.
8. Recognise the importance of NGO's, organisations and civil society in the preparation of legislation.

The European Social Model

The European Social Model has to be strengthened as a cornerstone of the European Model of Society based on solidarity: full employment with quality jobs in a healthy and safe work environment with access to universal services of general interest.

Binding quantitative and qualitative targets should be agreed upon on the European level. **A European Social Stability Pact** should be implemented- a pact for full employment, social welfare, social equity and ecological sustainability. As part of the Social Stability Pact the idea of a country-specific bottom line for the share of expenditure for welfare and social services in GDP is proposed.

For a world at peace

It is essential to reject any form of aggression or violence as a means of imposing sets of values. We actively advocate non-violent means and dialogue for resolving conflicts.

Conflict prevention and lasting peace requires a more equal balance in world trade and sustainable development. The EU has to take the side of people in developing countries in WTO negotiations.



A binding code of conduct on the arms trade and to prevent the exploitation of resources by multinational companies at the European level would be a cornerstone on the way to a more just and peaceful world.

The eradication of poverty must be the top priority.

III - For a European Constitution

Towards a Europe of the Peoples and Nations

The European Union has hitherto been exclusively based on the Member States, which are extremely reluctant to cede sovereignty to a European political body. Furthermore, the major discrepancies between the Member States in terms of size and population do not facilitate effective co-ordination between them.

Despite the fact that from the European Free Alliance standpoint the current process of European unity is inadequate, the party states its wish to work from within the existing institutions to influence, take part in and make use of all opportunities given for our work, so as to push the European Union in the desired direction.

The institutions should be reformed on the following basis:

- * By encouraging and improving the role of internal nations and regions within the Institutions. We will call for their representation within the Council of Ministers.
- * By thoroughly applying the principle of subsidiarity, in the sense that what can be done by a lesser body should not be done by a superior body.
- * By facilitating in every possible way interterritorial and cross-border co-operation between the Union's various countries, whose borders are the result of history and do not necessarily reflect the natural, economic or cultural links which bind them together.



* By moving towards a single electoral system for the European Parliament throughout the Union, respecting proportionality and the direct representation of peoples and nations.

The present constitutional process

The European Free Alliance supports the idea of a Constitution for the European Union. This is essential in order for citizens to achieve a democratic and transparent form of self-government in the Union, with respect for human rights (including self-determination) and for the principle of subsidiarity, ensuring decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizens they affect.

From a democratic point of view, the Draft Constitution proposed by the European Convention represents a real advance on the existing jumble of Treaties that define the Union and its powers. We especially welcome the inclusion of the Charter of Fundamental Rights as an integral part of the Constitution. Failure by the Intergovernmental Conference to adopt the Convention text was a serious setback for a more sensible reconstruction of the Union.

But there are inevitable defects in the Draft Constitution. There were very restricted opportunities for input to the Convention from stateless nations, even those endowed with substantial internal self-government inside existing Member States.

IV - A Safer Planet for Our Children

Sustainability is at the heart of our political strategy- cultural and linguistic as well as environmental. Building sustainable communities in a sustainable Europe.

The European Union should promote GMO free regions and zones and stringent legislation on labelling and traceability. Almost 90% of the people of Europe reject GMOs.



So this is not only an issue of food safety but of our democratic right to choose what we eat and for the rights of people to be put before profit.

Fighting climate change has become a concrete example of European leadership. As well as its implications for the future of Europe's energy and transport policies, the campaign against global warming has wider political implications. For instance, the high dependence of the U.S. economy on fossil fuels made the control of energy resources, especially oil fields, a major factor in the U.S. military attack on Iraq. Europe continues to lead on the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol without the U.S., the major emitter of CO₂, which refused to sign.

As far as nuclear energy (Euratom) is concerned, EFA defends a clear anti-nuclear position—and a phasing out from nuclear energy at the European level. Energy saving, renewables and the efficient use of energy represent the future for European society.

With over 1.2 billion of the world's people surviving on less than 1 day, we are committed to the achievement of the eight UN Millennium Goals and Johannesburg commitments. Combatting poverty and hunger, providing universal primary education, the empowerment of women and accessible health care are essential in achieving peace and justice.

Barcelona, 26 March 2004



Annex 7

PARTIES THAT HAVE BEEN FULLY MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN FREE ALLIANCE (1981-2006)

<< excell bestand >>



Annex 8

HONORARY MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN FREE ALLIANCE

Name	Honorary member because:	(Former) party
Heribert Barrera	Former MEP (1991-1994)	ERC
Carlos Bautista	Former MEP (1999-2003)	PA
Michele Columbu	Former MEP (1984-1989)	PSd'A
Maurits Coppieters	Former MEP (1979-1981)	VU
Diego de los Santos Lopez	Former MEP (1990-1994)	PA
Winnie Ewing	Former MEP (1989-1999)	SNP
Ana Frazao	Former staff (1994-2004)	-
Carlos Garaikoetxea	Former MEP (1987-1991)	EA
Gorka Knörr	Former MEP (1999-2001)	EA
Willy Kuijpers	Former MEP (1984-1989)	VU
Neil MacCormick	Former MEP (1999-2004)	SNP
Miquel Mayol i Raynal	Former MEP (2001-2004)	ERC
Mario Melis	Former MEP (1989-1994)	PSd'A
Camilo Nogueira	Former MEP (1999-2004)	BNG
Max Simeoni	Former MEP (1989-1994)	UPC
Jaak Vandemeulebroucke	Former MEP (1981-1998)	VU
Eurig Wyn	Former MEP (1999-2004)	Plaid Cymru



Annex 9

ELECTORAL RESULTS OF THE EUROPEAN FREE ALLIANCE IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (1979-2004)

Table 1: The EFA and the direct elections of the European Parliament (1979-2004)

European elections	EFA MEPs	Total number of MEPs	Share of the EFA MEPs in the European Parliament
June 1979 ¹	-	410	-
June 1984	3	434	0,7%
June 1989	6	518	1,2%
June 1994	3	567	0,5%
June 1999	9	626	1,4%
June 2004	5	732	0,7%

Table 2: The EFA in the Groups of the European Parliament (1981-2004)

Year	Group	Total number of MEPs	Number of seats of the Group	EFA MEPs	Share of the Group in the European Parliament	Share of the EFA in the European Parliament	Share of the EFA in the Group
1981	Group for Technical Coordination and Defence of Independent Groupings and Members	434 ²	11	2	2,5%	0,5%	18,2%
1984	Rainbow Group: Federation of the Green Alternative European Links, Agalev-Ecolo, the Danish People's Movement against Membership of the European Community, and the European Free Alliance in the European Parliament	434	19	3	4,4%	0,7%	15,8%
1989	Rainbow Group in the European Parliament	518	14	6	2,7%	1,2%	42,9%
1994	Group of the European Radical Alliance	567	19	3	3,4%	0,5%	15,8%
1999	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	626	48	9	7,7%	1,4%	18,8%
2004	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	732	43	5	5,7%	0,7%	11,6%



Annex 10

THE MEPS OF THE EUROPEAN FREE ALLIANCE (1981-2006)

Name	EFA MEP
BARRERA I COSTA Herribert	1991-1994
BAUTISTA OJEDA Carlos	1999-2003
BLANEY Neil T.	1979-1984; 1989-1994
COLUMBU Michele	1984-1989
COPPIETERS Maurits	1979-1981
DE LOS SANTOS LÓPEZ Diego	1990-1994
EVANS Jill	1999-2004; 2004-
EWING Winifred	1989-1994; 1994-1999
GARAIKOETXEA Carlos	1987-1989; 1989-1991
HUDGHTON, Ian	1998-1999; 1999-2004; 2004-
JOAN I MARÍ Bernat	2004-
KNÖRR BORRÀS Gorka	1999-2001
KUIJPERS Willy	1984-1989
MACARTNEY Allan	1994-1998 (†)
MACCORMICK Neil	1999-2004
MAES Nelly	1998-1999; 1999-2004
MAYOL I RAYNAL Miquel	2001-2004
MELIS Mario	1989-1994
MORETTI Luigi	1989-1994
NOGUEIRA ROMAN Camilo	1999-2004
PACHECO Pedro	1989-1990
SIMEONI Max	1989-1994
SMITH Alyn	2004-




Name	EFA MEP
SPERONI Francesco	1989-1994
STAES Bart	1999-2002
VANDEMEULEBROUCKE Jaak	1981-1984; 1984-1989; 1989-1994; 1994-1998
WYN Eurig	1999-2004
ZDANOKA Tatjana	2004-

NOTES

- 1 At the moment of the first direct European elections of June 1979, the European Free Alliance (EFA) didn't exist. Although Maurits Coppieters and Neil Blaney were members of the same Group in the European Parliament, we do not consider them as MEPs of the EFA, which wasn't founded until July 1981.
- 2 After the accession of Greece to the European Community (January 1, 1981), the total number of MEPs was 434. In October 1981, Greece held European elections for the first time.

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES


Ålands Framtid (The Åland Future)

	
FOUNDED:	1999
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	May 2005
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Anders Eriksson
MEMBERS (c.):	250
WEBSITE URL:	www.alandsframtid.nu

We work for the independence of Åland Islands from Finland. Our aim is based upon the future of our economy and our Swedish language. As the Swedish minority in Finland diminishes the mainland becomes more and more monolingual. Finland has failed to guarantee the protection of the Swedish status of Åland islands confirmed by the League of Nations.

Our economical structure is based upon shipping and tourism while the Finnish economy is predominantly industrial. The Finnish tax system does not therefore correspond to the needs of Åland Islands.


Alleanza Libera Emiliana – Libertà Emiliana (Emilian Free Alliance – Free Emilia)

	
FOUNDED:	1999
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	1999 (observer member)
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Luigi Ragazzi, national coordinator
MEMBERS (c.):	100
WEBSITE URL:	utenti.tripod.it/libertaemiliana

The party has some representatives at local level, in town council and suburban councils of Emilia in Reggio Emilia province and Piacenza. We collaborate with civic lists at local level. We support and defend: a strong regional autonomy, the right to self-determination, social and environmental rights, Emilian traditions and language and typical products of Emilia Romagna


INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES

Bloque Nacionalista Galego, BNG (Galician Nationalist Bloc)

	
FOUNDED:	1982
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	1994 (observer member), 2000 (full member)
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Anxo Quintana (spokesperson)
MEMBERS (c.):	15.000
WEBSITE URL	www.bng-galiza.org

Bloque Nacionalista Galego strives for the democratic promotion of the Galician nationalism, the promotion of the cultural and linguistic diversity of Galiza and the stateless nations, the defence and protection of the Galician interests in all sectors and activities to recognise and extend their constitutional competences not recognised by the Galician and Spanish government, the protection and defence of the peace and human rights and rights of peoples especially around the world, and the relations with the enormous Galician diaspora.

Chunta Aragonesista (Aragonesese Union)

	
FOUNDED:	1984
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	2002 (observer); 2004 (full member)
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Chesús Bernal Bernal (vice secretary- general)
MEMBERS (c.):	3500
WEBSITE URL	www.chunta.com

Forming and Informing our militants by the elaboration of our ideas and publications of documents is our main aim. We try to inform and influence cities and communalities by organising colloquia, Bureau meetings, round table meetings, conferences in the whole territory of Aragon.

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES

Enotna lista (Unity List)



FOUNDED:	1975
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	May 2004 (observer member)
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Vladimir Smrtnik
MEMBERS (c.):	6000
WEBSITE URL	www.elnet.at

The EL is a party of the Slovene minority and of the South-Carinthian region in Austria. The party tries to improve the situation of the Slovene minority and tries to put special attention to questions of regional development and cross border cooperation. Currently the EL is represented with 52 council-members in 22 municipalities in the bilingual area of Carinthia. Besides that, the EL has its representatives in different chambers and institutions on regional level.

Erdély Bánság (Liga Transilvania-Banat)



FOUNDED:	2000
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	2001 (observer member)
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Sabin Gherman
MEMBERS (c.):	100
WEBSITE URL	no website

The Liga Transilvania-Banat is a transnational party who defends the interest of all the people living in these two historic regions. They focus on more regional autonomy from Bucarest and defend the rights of self-determination of all peoples living there.

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES

ESA-Vinozhito (EFA-Rainbow)

FOUNDED:	1994
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	November 2000 (full member)
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	EFA–Rainbow has no president but is represented by the political secretariat
MEMBERS (c.):	250
WEBSITE URL	www.florina.org

Promotion of the rights (ethnic, educational, linguistic, cultural etc.) for the ethnic Macedonian minority residing within the Greek territory. Adoption and implementation of policies that promote diversity and local & regional development and firmly against nationalism, racism, xenophobia, intolerance.

Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, ERC (Republican Left of Catalonia)

FOUNDED:	1931
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	8 May 1989
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Josep-Lluís Carod-Rovira
MEMBERS (c.):	9495
WEBSITE URL	www.esquerra.org

ERC is a political organisation that is socially left-wing and nationally Catalan. Its basic political principles are defined in the Statement of Ideology approved at the 19th National Congress in 1993. This is organised into the three areas that give the organisation its name: Esquerra (commitment to social issues), República (commitment to the community) and Catalunya (commitment to the nation).

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES

Eusko Alkartasuna, EA (Basque Solidarity)



FOUNDED:	1986
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	1986
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Begoña Errazti
MEMBERS (c.):	9500
WEBSITE URL	www.euskoalkartasuna.org

EA is a Basque social democrat independentist party who believes in the self determination of nations of Europe, based on social justice and on the respect and protection of environment.

Federació PSM-entesa nacionalista de les Illes Balears

(Federation PSM-Nationalist Agreement of the Balearic Islands) = Partit Socialista de Mallorca-Entesa Nacionalista, Partit Socialista de Menorca-Entesa Nacionalista, Entesa Nacionalista i Ecologista d'Eivissa



FOUNDED:	1977
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	2000 (observer member)
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Gabriel Vicens I Mir, secretary-general; Miquel Àngel Maria i Ballester, responsible foreign affairs
MEMBERS (c.):	1800
WEBSITE URL	www.psm-entesa.org

We are a federation of parties, which was born out of autonomous parties and they keep their own personality and autonomy in relation with the political action concerning their island, while maintaining a common political and ideological bases. That is the reason why they fight together for the national freedom of all the Balearic Islands, for a solid social justice in all the domains where it is necessary and for the economic, social and ecological sustainable development.

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES

Fryske Nasjonale Partij, FNP (Frisian National Party)

FOUNDED:	1962
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	1981
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Cees van der Meulen
MEMBERS (c.):	1400
WEBSITE URL	www.fnp.nl

As a Frisian party we want to mind our own dealings in Friesland. The party is there for all the people, the inhabitants of the Province regardless their origin, since the party believes equality for all people is a key issue. FNP values a society in which everybody can develop his/her identity to a maximum extend but with respect to the others. This applies also for new inhabitants of Friesland who are not familiar with our language and culture. In the political program of FNP the role of education is pivotal but also other issues are important as the involvement of citizens in politics, the economical relation between Friesland and the Hague, the social security system, language and culture.

Liga Fronte Veneto (Ligue of the Venetian Front)

FOUNDED:	1989
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	1999 (observer member), 2000 (full member)
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Fabrizio Comencini
MEMBERS (c.):	939
WEBSITE URL	www.ligafrentevenet.org

Liga Fronte Veneto has as objective the Independence of the Veneto People, which through the instrument of the self-determination, want to dispose entirely of the original statute of sovereignty, through democratic, non-violent and electoral means, in compliance with international law.

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES

Ligue Savoisienne (Savoy League)



FOUNDED:	1996
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	2000
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Patrice Abeille
MEMBERS (c.):	4926
WEBSITE URL	ligue.savoisienne.org

Reinstate sovereignty for the people of the Savoy by proving the lack of legal basis for the annexation of 1860. We join the partisans who work to achieve this sovereignty by intervening in all issue concerned with the Savoy region. Since 1998 we have presented candidates in all elections as far as was possible. We also edit the newspaper le Savoisien. The party militants are based locally and in co-operation with other associations they inform people at public manifestations, in debates, local festivities on all kinds of issues related to the region.

Magyar Föderalista Párt (Hungarian Federalist Party)



FOUNDED:	2000
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	2001 (observer member)
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	József Mihajlovics
MEMBERS (c.):	200
WEBSITE URL	no website

The Hungarian Federalist Party represents the Hungarian minority living in the southern part of the Slovak Republic. They focus on the use of the Hungarian language in relation to the government, the want to protect their culture by guarantying education in the Hungarian language.

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES

Mebyon Kernow (The Party for Cornwall)

FOUNDED:	1951
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	2003 (full member)
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Dick Cole
MEMBERS (c.):	600
WEBSITE URL	www.mebyonkernow.org

Mebyon Kernow – the Party for Cornwall is a political party campaigning for greater self-government for the historic nation of Cornwall. Our political philosophy is based on four important cornerstones. We are Cornish, Green, Left-of-Centre and Decentralist.

We are working to create a just and fair society in Cornwall, with greater economic prosperity and real social justice for one and all. We are leading the fight to win a legislative Cornish Assembly, with the powers to make a difference.

Moravian Democratic Party, integrated in The Moravians in 2006

FOUNDED:	1994 by law, 1990 as movement
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	2001 (observer member)
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Pavel Dohňal; secretary Jiří Novotný
MEMBERS (c.):	1200
WEBSITE URL	www.moravane.cz

Moravians is a political party in the Czech Republic fighting for rights of the Moravian nation and Moravian land there. The Party of Moravians was founded as a unity party out of Moravian Democratic Party (Observer-member of EFA) and Movement for Self-governing Moravia and Silesia. During the years 1990-1996, Moravians had representation in the Parliament but in the years 1996-2006 they only had local representation. They are currently preparing a comeback to the Parliament.

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES

Mouvement Régional Savoie (Regional Mouvement Savoy)



FOUNDED:	1971
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	1991
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Alain Favre
MEMBERS (c.):	200
WEBSITE URL	no website

The regional movement of the Savoy aims to establish a region in the framework of the current French legislation and to promote the Savoy identity in general. Its philosophy is based on a Europe of the regions as described by Denis de Rougemont.

Partei der deutschsprachigen Belgier, PDB

(Party of the German speaking Community in Belgium)



FOUNDED:	1971
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	1981
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Guido Breuer
MEMBERS (c.):	350
WEBSITE URL	www.pju-pdb.be

PDB is the regional party that represents the people in this small region. It was founded on the values of a Christian and social tradition. Its main goal is to defend and represent the identity of the people living in the German speaking part of Belgium.

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES

Partido Andalucista (Andalusian Party)

FOUNDED:	1965
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	1999
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Julián Alvarez, secretary-general
MEMBERS (c.):	18.000
WEBSITE URL	www.partidoandalucista.org

The Andalusian Party declares itself ideologically as a political and nationalist organisation that is federalist, left and progressive. It has as main objective the defense of the interest of the Andalusian people and it wants to be the political instrument to achieve equality with other Peoples of Spain, Europe and the world

Partit Occitan (Occitan Party)


FOUNDED:	1987, as a follow up of VVA
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	1982-1983 as MSAO “Volem Viure Al País”
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Gustave Alirol
MEMBERS (c.):	500
WEBSITE URL	partitoccitan.org

Partit Occitan aims at autonomy of Occitania, the “land of the Occitan language” which includes southern France, a dozen alpine valleys in Italy and Val d’Aran in Spain. The party’s aims are:

- To set up a credible Occitan’s political movement, independent of all other parties and struggling for Occitan self-government.
- To reverse alienation and raise the consciousness of the Occitan people.
- To make the Occitan question come out in the political field.

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES


Partido Sardo d’Azione (Sardinian Action Party)

	
FOUNDED:	1921
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	1984
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Silvano Cadoni
MEMBERS (c.):	3000
WEBSITE URL	www.psdaz-ichnos.com

The Partidu Sardu–Partido Sardo d’Azione is the free association of those that propose, through the political action, to affirm the sovereignty of the Sardinian people on its own territory, and to lead Sardinia to independence.

The party supports the federal or con-federal free union, at the European and Mediterranean scope, of nations and peoples. The bases for the free union is sovereignty, solidarity and common interest. Therefore the party claims for the Sardinian people the necessary space of political, communitarian and International action.

Partitu di a Nazione Corsa, PNC (Corsican National Party)


	
FOUNDED:	7 December 2002, following the UPC created on 14 July 1977
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	the foundation in 1981
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Marc Papi; Jean-Christophe Angelini, national secretary
MEMBERS (c.):	300
WEBSITE URL	under construction

PNC has as objectives to pursue all kinds of political actions and to organise cultural, economical and social events with the aim to safeguard the existence and progress of the Corsican people through ensuring the respect of the national rights of its people on its territory, the island Corsica.

The party follows the path, imbedded in the universal values, of political struggle in an exclusively public and democratic way that should lead to a responsible Corsican community founded on the historical and cultural values of our their people, founded on social justice, on sustainable ecology and based on the rejection of xenophobia.

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES


Plaid Cymru (The Party of Wales)

	
FOUNDED:	1925
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	1983
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Dafydd Iwan
MEMBERS (c.):	8000
WEBSITE URL	www.plaidcymru.org

Plaid Cymru's aims are:

- To promote the constitutional advancement of Wales with a view to attaining Full National Status for Wales within the European Union.
- To ensure economic prosperity, social justice and the health of the natural environment, based on decentralist socialism.
- To build a national community based on equal citizenship, respect for different traditions and cultures and the equal worth of all individuals, whatever their race, nationality, gender, colour, creed, sexuality, age, ability or social background.
- To create a bilingual society by promoting the revival of the Welsh language.
- To promote Wales's contribution to the global community and to attain membership of the United Nations.

Polska Partia Ludowa (Lithuanian Polish Peoples Party)

	
FOUNDED:	2000
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	2003 (observer member); 2004 (full member)
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Antonina Połtawiec
MEMBERS (c.):	1000
WEBSITE URL	www.llp.lt

The Lithuanian Peoples Polish Party represents the Polish minority living in Lithuania in the surroundings of Vilnius and south of the capital.

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES

Régions et Peuples Solidaires, R&PS (Regions and Peoples in solidarity)



FOUNDED:	1995
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	??
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Gustave Alirol
MEMBERS (c.):	??
WEBSITE URL	www.r-p-s.info

R&PS is a political movement that values humanism, democracy, identity and federalism. Humanist since we defend the universal values and the universal human rights. Democratic since R&PS recognizes and defends the principles of compatibility and complementarity between individual rights of citizens and the collective rights of peoples and communities (the right to self determination). We value identity in an open and non-xenophobic context since we defend the promotion and use of individual and collective cultural and linguistic rights. Federalist since we acknowledge the right of all the peoples, communities and regions to organize themselves freely in the political, economical, social and cultural field.

Ruch autonomii I ska, RAS. (Silesian Autonomy Movement)



FOUNDED:	1990
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	2001 (observer member) 2002 (full member)
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Jerzy Gorzelik
MEMBERS (c.):	6000
WEBSITE URL	raslaska.aremmedia.net

RAS wants to achieve political autonomy for the region Silesia through peaceful and democratic action. They struggle to reform and turn Poland into a federal state, get an official recognition of the Silesian nationality and cooperate with other regions, nations and stateless nations in Europe.

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES

Scottish National Party, SNP

FOUNDED:	1934
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	1989
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Ian Hudghton MEP
MEMBERS (c.):	11.000
WEBSITE URL	www.snp.org

The SNP is a democratic left-of-centre political party committed to Scottish Independence. It aims to create a just, caring and enterprising society by releasing Scotland's full potential as an independent nation in the mainstream of modern Europe.

Slovenska Skupnost (Slovenian Union)

FOUNDED:	1975
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	1991
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Adriano Corsi
MEMBERS (c.):	10.000
WEBSITE URL	www.slovenskaskupnost.org

It's the only party of the Slovenian minority in Italy, even if other Slovene speaking politics are members of other Italian parties. Voters of the SSk are living in the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia along the border with the Republic of Slovenia in three provinces of Udine, Gorizia and Trieste. Like other minority's parties in Europe it tries to bring together all Slovenian voters living in Italy to be representative of all the people, without posing ideological obstacles.

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES

SPIRIT



FOUNDED:	November 2001
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	June 2002 (full member; following Volksunie 1981)
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Geert Lambert
MEMBERS (c.):	5500
WEBSITE URL	www.spirit.be

SPIRIT is one of the heirs of the former Volksunie (VU). This Flemish founding member of EFA focused mainly on transferring capacities to the regional level, but also took the lead in various social topics and the environment. After the split of the VU in 2001, the progressive group set up the new party SPIRIT, an acronym for Social, Progressive, International, Regionalist, Integral-democratic, “Toekomstgericht” (prospective). With the baseline ‘De Vlaamse Links-Liberalen’ (Flemish left liberals), SPIRIT’s political line is based on freedom, equality and responsibility.

Union für Südtirol, UfS (Union of South Tyrol)




FOUNDED:	1989
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	1996
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Party board: Eva Klotz (member of the provincial council Südtiroler Landtag), Andreas Pöder (party secretary), Herbert Campidell, Sepp Mitterhofer, Irma Greif
MEMBERS (c.):	1100
WEBSITE URL	www.unionfs.com

The goals of the party are to preserve the Tyrolean identity and culture, execution of the right of self-determination of the people in South Tyrol (a goal is a future without Italy) – environmental protection – activities in political, cultural and social regard.

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES


Union du Peuple alsacien, UPA (Union of the peoples of Elzas)

	
FOUNDED:	1988
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	ELV and UPA since 1991
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Daniel Willmé
MEMBERS (c.):	60
WEBSITE URL	under construction

We are a small party in reconstruction and with limited resources. We fight for more responsibilities and a larger autonomy for Alsace within France and Europe.

Another battle is the recognition of the Alsatian language next to the French one. Hence, we want to abolish Article 2 of the French Constitution, which only accepts French as official language.

Unitat Catalana, UC (Catalan Union)


	
FOUNDED:	1986
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	1991
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Jaume Roure
MEMBERS (c.):	200
WEBSITE URL	www.unitatcatalana.org

UC is a nationalist Catalan movement that is progressive, democratic, pro-European organised and working in the Northern Catalan territory.

INFORMATION FORM ON THE EFA PARTIES

Unvaniezh Demokratel Breizh, UDB

(Breton Democratic Union-Union Démocratique Bretonne)

	
FOUNDED:	1964
MEMBER OF EFA SINCE:	POBL since the foundation in 1981 <i>(UDB observer member since 1984 only official representative since 1987)</i>
NAME OF THE PRESIDENT:	Ronan Divard (spokes person)
MEMBERS (c.):	670
WEBSITE URL	www.udb-bzh.net

UDB wants to have self-government for Brittany and they are working towards this aim with democratic means to convince the citizens that with self-government their life will be better, the democracy more respected and the language and culture much better defended; in elections they present candidates on all levels in order to be able to take part in the decisions and to show to their people that they are able to work for a better life and a better future.

The road between Strasbourg and Brussels: the European Free Alliance (1981-2006)

The history of the European Free Alliance (EFA) got underway before it was officially established in Strasbourg in July 1981. Previously, contacts had already existed between various European nationalist and regionalist movements and political parties. The EFA was certainly not the first pan-European attempt to put into effect the concept of a Europe of the Peoples and the Regions, although it was the first initiative to gain any serious foothold. The impetus that went out from the first direct election of the European Parliament in 1979 had been crucial in this respect. Soon, those involved felt the necessity to join forces both within the institution – with a technical co-ordination group, at least during the early stages – as well as extending beyond the European Parliament, setting up the EFA as an umbrella organisation. With time, the EFA itself managed to rally an increasing number of parties behind it. To many of these parties, who were not represented in the European Parliament, the EFA served as their mouthpiece on the European forum. The EFA had its ups and downs in the European Parliament, but percentage-wise, the EFA partners remained marginal, never quite managing to start their own parliamentary group of nationalists and regionalists. The Rainbow group (1989-1994) was the most successful approximation of an actual parliamentary group.

The EFA rests on two cornerstones: Europe for one thing with the nations and regions for another: unity and diversity rolled into one. In doing so, the European process of integration which typified the second part of the twentieth century, is placed in a position of dialogue with the element of decentralization which enjoyed resurgence during the same time span. Simply put, the EFA's central concept boils down to the following: a unified, federal and solidary Europe in which the regions and the peoples of Europe have equal input and can decide on matters and issues that concern them (subsidiarity).

Attention also went out to post-materialist topics such as the environment and peace. Pacifism and non-violence have always been self-imposed terms to the EFA which the organisation duly extended to those seeking membership. Nonetheless, sustaining this position has invariably been something of a double-edged exercise. Statements on terrorism in the Basque Country or Corsica were invariably shaded and balanced. The EFA radically steered a wide berth from any associations with persons and/or organisations preaching or using violence. The same applied to racist or xenophobe statements and attitudes. This was demonstrated when the Lega Nord was expelled from the EFA in 1994. The organisation's defence of diversity has con-

sistently been embedded in its upholding of human rights.

The basic principles of the EFA – as laid down in the Charter of Brussels, the Declaration of Bastia and the Declaration of the Convention of Brussels – were complemented step by step at the study days held each year, devoted to concrete topics (agricultural policy in 1986 in Cardiff, social policy in 1987 in Ljouwert, development cooperation in 1988 in Sardinia, etc.). This too has been to the merit of the EFA: in spite of the fact that the alliance and the parliamentary group in the European Parliament often found themselves made up of highly disparate components, a common denominator was found. Gradually, this gave shape to a platform which all EFA partners were able to rally behind and which they were prepared to embrace as a basis for the European elections.

The EFA's strategy has always been twofold. For one thing, there was the constant quest for expansion, a search for parties who were on the same wavelength, ideologically speaking. As an umbrella organisation, the EFA proved successful in this respect, managing to get other regionalist and nationalist parties to rally behind it and currently numbering 33 effective members. Of this number, there is just one MEP for the whole of the ten countries who became members of the EU in 2004. In the European Parliament successes were less balanced. Periods with a comparatively high number of MEP's alternated with periods with few MEP's. For a long time, the EFA amounted to little more than a loose affiliation, an alliance. During the 90's, the statutes were changed, offering more clarity on who could join and on the procedures to do so. In 2004, the EFA was formally "re-incorporated" in Barcelona as a European political party, which certainly

served to tighten the bonds between the parties and the EFA.

For another thing, there is the pursuance of independence, this time in terms of the organisation's workings and ideology. Although the EFA often sought to work together – often out of necessity – in the European Parliament with parties and/or members of Parliament who did not exactly match the EFA picture (Folkebevægelsen mod EF, Italian radicals, Energie Radicale, etc.) it has always insisted on an independent position. Cooperation, did not necessarily mean assimilation.

The collaboration with the Greens in the European Parliament is a constant in the history of the EFA. This collaboration was promoted by the number of green topics included as part of the EFA platform. The EFA was one of the frontrunners in opposing nuclear energy for example. The collaboration with the Greens was also a logical step in that both partners sensed there to be a mutual necessity to engage in further collaboration. The path had already been smoothed by the Rainbow group (1984-1989) which held twelve Greens, as well as by the mixed party lists mainly in France during regional and European elections (in 1989 for example) as an expedient to reach the electoral threshold. In view of the increasingly higher number of members required to make up a parliamentary group, in 1999, and again in 2004 it was a logical step to form a group made up of European Greens on the one hand and regionalists and nationalists on the other hand. Logical but not necessarily a matter-of-fact step: the initial scepticism against regionalism and nationalism among certain Greens had to be overcome first. Add to this the fact that the Greens are numerically superior in the parliamentary group, which in turn also has a series of "domestic" consequences. All the same,

it would appear the EFA has found a good sparring partner in the European Greens.

More than anything else, the EFA has revealed itself to be a catalyst. To small parties it is a convenient tool to see their demands, desires and interests addressed on a European level. Maurits Coppeters once succinctly put it as: “*Je serai votre député à Bruxelles*” (I will be your representative in Brussels). This tool has not always proved efficient however – or at least it failed to be always used to full effect. Organising and keeping together a European political party – even in the digital age – is not plain sailing.

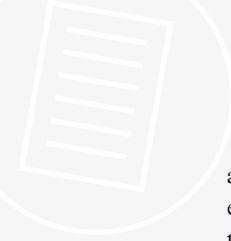
Though by the same token, the parties too are important to the EFA. Especially now that, since 2004, European political parties are required to demonstrate they have Parliamentary representatives in several member states, it is important to be able to produce such credentials. The number of members the EFA is able to put forward also has its effect on funding. Which is why sustained expansion always remained a matter of crucial importance.

From the very outset, the Flemings of the Volksunie played a principal role within the EFA. Right after the European elections of 1979, they – and Maurits Coppeters in particular – set the ball rolling. They were also the ones that had previous experience in parliament, not to mention experience in government office, as they had been part of the Belgian coalition government. Moreover, since 1979, they had been represented in the European Parliament by the selfsame Coppeters. To boot, as Flemings they had the central location of Brussels which they were able to play to the full as a strong suit. As such, the Flemish member(s) elected were a constant in the European Parliament up to the late 90’s. For its first nine-year run, the EFA’s chairperson had also stepped up from Volksunie ranks. As a

result of internal strife, the Volksunie was increasingly made to relinquish the central role it had played previously, with this role to some extent being taken over by parties such as the Scottish National Party and the parties from the Spanish State. Ultimately, the Volksunie was to evaporate altogether in 2001, prompting a vague sense of unease in the other partners as to the future of the EFA.

On the balance of 25 years of the EFA, the hardly accommodating atmosphere under which the association went ahead as of the early 80’s, cannot be overlooked. When in 1980, a question into France’s Corsica policy was experienced as something of an insult and an inappropriate interference in the country’s internal affairs, the regions were able to say their piece in the Convention for a European Constitution. Since then, EFA parties have gone on to be represented in regional and/or national parliaments, including in Belgium, France, and Spain. In the United Kingdom, since 1999, Scotland and Wales have each been given their own Assembly, in which the nationalist parties are represented.

The EFA has never managed to rally all regionalists and nationalists behind it, gathering them under the same “umbrella”. For this, they are simply too mutually dissimilar. The failure to pull in PNV (Basque Country) and CDC (Catalonia) slowed down the EFA project in the early days. In some cases (such as Herri Batasuna and Vlaams Blok), accession was never welcome or even at odds with the EFA’s platform. In this sense, this can be considered a drawback in a European Parliament that has over 700 members. All the same, the EFA has developed from a loose alliance into a European political party. It has been duly represented during every single legislature in the European Parliament, upholding the platform that had been agreed on at the time – in the committees for ex-



ample – with the resources, office holders and funding that were available at the time.

The EFA was officially founded in Strasbourg on July 9, 1981. In May 2006 it celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary at the General Assembly in the European Parliament in Brussels. The distance between Strasbourg and Brussels may not be huge in terms of kilometres but it meant for EFA the evolution from an alliance to a European political party.

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ABSTRACT

De Estrasburgo a Bruselas:

la Alianza Libre Europea

(1981-2006)

La historia de la Alianza Libre Europea (ALE) comenzó mucho antes de su fundación oficial, en Estrasburgo, en julio de 1981. Ya se habían establecido contactos, previamente, entre diversos movimientos y partidos nacionalistas y regionalistas europeos. Si bien es cierto que la ALE no fue la primera tentativa de materializar la idea de una Europa de los Pueblos y de las Regiones en el ámbito europeo sí fue, sin embargo, la primera iniciativa en lograrlo verdaderamente. A este respecto, el impulso que suscitaron las primeras elecciones por sufragio universal del Parlamento Europeo en 1979 tuvo una importancia crucial. La necesidad de unir fuerzas se sintió rápidamente tanto en el seno de la institución, con la creación de un grupo de coordinación técnica, como fuera de ella, con la ALE. A la ALE se fueron adhiriendo progresivamente más partidos. Para muchos de ellos, que no estaban representados en el Parlamento Europeo, ésta desempeñaba un papel de portavoz en el debate europeo. Si bien es cierto en lo que a representación se refiere, hubo altibajos en el Parlamento Europeo, los socios de la ALE pudieron siempre mantener un grado suficiente de representación, aunque nunca hayan conseguido crear un grupo parlamentario propio de nacionalistas y regionalistas. Fue el grupo Arco Iris (1989-1994) el que más se acercó a ese objetivo.

La ALE se basó desde su fundación en dos pilares fundamentales: Europa, por un lado, y las naciones y regiones, por otro: la unidad y la diversidad. El proceso europeo de integración que marcó la segunda mitad del siglo XX se desarrolló paralelamente al proceso de descentralización, que experimentó un auge durante el mismo período. De manera simplificada, la idea central de la ALE descansa en una Europa unida, federal y solidaria en la que las regiones y los pueblos tengan una aportación equivalente y cuenten con la potestad de decidir acerca de las materias que les conciernen (subsidiariedad).

Han destacado igualmente en su ideología temas como el medio ambiente y la paz. El pacifismo y la no violencia siempre han constituido valores plenamente compartidos por la ALE y todos sus miembros, a pesar de los muchos e importantes obstáculos a los que se ha tenido que hacer frente. Los posicionamientos relativos al terrorismo en el País Vasco o en Córcega han sido siempre delicados pero contundentes. El recurso a la violencia ha constituido siempre para la ALE la línea roja que no cabe franquear. Esta misma intransigencia se ha aplicado a los discursos y actitudes racistas o xenófobos, confirmándose en 1994, con la exclusión de la Lega Norte de la federación. Para la ALE, la defensa de la

RESUMEN

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diversidad siempre ha sido una cuestión de Derechos Humanos.

Los principios fundamentales de la ALE, definidos por la Carta de Bruselas, la Declaración de Bastia y la Declaración de la Convención de Bruselas, se han ido enriqueciendo progresivamente durante las jornadas de estudio que, cada año, han abordado una temática concreta (la política agrícola, en 1986 en Cardiff; la política social, en 1987 en Ljouwert; la cooperación al desarrollo, en 1988 en Cerdeña, etc.). A pesar de la heterogeneidad de los componentes de la alianza y del grupo en el Parlamento Europeo, siempre se pudo encontrar un denominador común. Y este hecho es también fruto del esfuerzo de la ALE. De esta manera, todos sus socios han contado siempre con un programa común que les ha servido de impulso y pedestal en cada una de las elecciones europeas.

La estrategia de la ALE siempre ha sido doble. Por un lado, se ha centrado continuamente en la ampliación a partidos cuya ideología estuviese en línea con su filosofía, y en este sentido la ALE ha jugado con éxito el papel de organización federadora. A lo largo de estos años, otros partidos nacionalistas y regionalistas se han adherido, contando en la actualidad con 33 miembros efectivos. La ALE fue durante mucho tiempo un (libre) acuerdo de cooperación, una alianza. En los noventa se modificaron sus estatutos y se detallaron de manera más clara las modalidades de afiliación y funcionamiento. En 2004 en Barcelona, la ALE fue “refundada” formalmente en calidad de partido político europeo, lo que permitió reforzar los vínculos entre los partidos y la ALE.

Sin embargo, en el Parlamento Europeo los éxitos fueron desiguales. Los períodos fastos caracterizados por un gran número de miembros electos se alternaron con períodos más difíciles. Actualmente, tan solo

uno de sus actuales parlamentarios proviene de uno de los diez países que se adhirió a la UE en 2004.

Por otro lado, la ALE siempre ha aspirado a su visibilidad y independencia en el seno del Parlamento Europeo. Aunque a regañadientes haya tenido que colaborar con partidos y/o parlamentarios que no compartían exactamente su línea (Folkebevaegelsen mod EF, Radicales Italianos, Energie Radicale, etc.), siempre ha defendido una posición independiente. Cooperación sí... pero no asimilación.

La colaboración con los Verdes en el Parlamento Europeo ha sido una constante en la historia de la ALE. Esta colaboración se vio en gran medida favorecida por la abundancia de temas medioambientales que figuraban en el programa de la ALE. A este respecto, la ALE estuvo entre los primeros en actuar contra la energía nuclear. Esta colaboración era igualmente lógica dado que su necesidad resultó ser recíproca. El camino ya había sido trazado por el grupo Arco Iris (1984-1989), en el que 12 de sus miembros eran ecologistas, y por la constitución de listas comunes, principalmente en Francia, constituidas con ocasión de las elecciones regionales y/o europeas (por ejemplo en 1989) como un medio para conseguir franquear los umbrales electorales. El número cada vez mayor de miembros necesarios para formar un grupo parlamentario explica igualmente que la formación de un grupo entre los Verdes Europeos, por un lado, y los nacionalistas y los regionalistas, por otro, resultó ser una etapa lógica en 1999 y en 2004. Una etapa lógica, sin lugar a dudas... pero no necesariamente fácil: hubo que superar el escepticismo inicial de algunos Verdes con respecto al nacionalismo y al regionalismo. Los Verdes han sido siempre, además, predominantes numéricamente en el grupo, lo que también tiene consecuencias internas.

Con todo, parece que la ALE ha encontrado en los Verdes Europeos un buen socio.

La ALE ha actuado siempre, desde todos los puntos de vista, como un catalizador. Constituye para los pequeños partidos un instrumento práctico a través del cual canalizar sus exigencias, sus reivindicaciones y sus intereses en el debate europeo. Maurits Coppieters lo expresó un día de manera concisa: *“Je serai votre député à Bruxelles”* (Yo seré vuestro diputado en Bruselas). Sin embargo, este instrumento no ha resultado siempre tan eficaz, o, quizás, no se ha explotado siempre plenamente. Incluso en la era de la electrónica, la organización de un partido político europeo no es nada fácil.


Por otro lado, queda claro que los partidos son el pilar fundamental de la ALE. Poder presentar tales cartas de nobleza es aún más importante desde 2004, año a partir del cual los partidos políticos europeos deben poder demostrar que tienen una representación parlamentaria en diversos Estados miembros. El número de miembros de la ALE también tiene consecuencias desde el punto de vista financiero. Son muchas razones que ilustran la importancia que siempre ha tenido y que sigue teniendo el crecimiento permanente.

Los flamencos de la Volksunie han desempeñado un papel crucial en el seno de la ALE. Ellos, y más particularmente Maurits Coppieters, fueron los que lanzaron el movimiento después de las elecciones europeas de 1979. Ya tenían experiencia parlamentaria, y desde 1977, de gobierno. Además, estaban representados en el Parlamento Europeo por Coppieters desde 1979. La situación central de Bruselas fue otra baza que los flamencos supieron aprovechar. Así pues, los electos(a)s flamenco(a)s fueron una constante en el Parlamento Europeo hasta finales de los años noventa. Durante

los nueve primeros años, el presidente de la ALE provenía también de la Volksunie. Debido a problemas internos, la Volksunie fue desapareciendo poco a poco de la escena y partidos como el Scottish National Party y otros partidos del estado español retomaron el liderazgo del proyecto. La Volksunie desapareció finalmente en 2001, lo que suscitó un cierto sobresalto en cuanto al futuro de la ALE.

A la hora de hacer balance de los veinticinco años de la ALE, conviene sin lugar a dudas tener en cuenta el contexto poco receptivo en el que se creó, a principios de los años 1980. Mientras que en aquel momento en el Parlamento Europeo la mínima cuestión sobre política francesa en Córcega era aún considerada como un insulto y una injerencia fuera de lugar, en la actualidad parece que los entes subestatales sí que han tenido más protagonismo en la Convención para una Constitución Europea. Los partidos de la ALE han adquirido, desde entonces, representación en Parlamentos regionales y/o nacionales, en particular en Bélgica, Francia, Reino Unido y España. Escocia y País de Gales disponen, desde 1999, de su propia asamblea, en la que los partidos nacionalistas están representados.

La ALE nunca ha podido reunir a todos los nacionalistas y regionalistas bajo su estandarte. Sus posiciones son demasiado divergentes para hacerlo. El hecho de no poder integrar el PNV (País Vasco) y el CDC (Cataluña) ralentizó el proyecto de la ALE, en sus inicios. En algunos casos (como el de Herri Batasuna y el Vlaams Blok), la adhesión ni se planteó pues era contradictoria con el programa de la ALE y su ideología. En ese sentido, esto ha podido resultar ser un inconveniente innegable en un Parlamento Europeo de más de 700 miembros. Con todo, la ALE ha sabido evolucionar, pasando de ser un libre acuerdo de coope-



ración a un partido político europeo. La federación ha estado representada, en cada legislatura, en el Parlamento Europeo, y ha defendido en todo momento su programa con los medios humanos y financieros a su alcance.

La ALE fue fundada oficialmente en Estrasburgo el 9 de julio de 1981. En mayo 2006, la ALE celebró su XXV aniversario en el hemiciclo del Parlamento Europeo, en Bruselas. La distancia entre Estrasburgo y Bruselas quizás no parezca tan importante en términos temporales, pero para la ALE estos veinticinco años tienen una significación crucial: de alianza ha pasado a convertirse en Partido Político Europeo.

La strada tra Strasburgo e Bruxelles:

I'Alleanza Libera Europea

(1981-2006)

La storia dell'Alleanza Libera Europea (ALE) è iniziata prima ancora della sua costituzione ufficiale a Strasburgo nel luglio del 1981. Già da prima c'erano contatti tra i diversi movimenti e partiti regionalisti e nazionalisti.

L'ALE non è certo stato il primo tentativo di realizzare l'idea dell'Europa delle regioni a livello europeo ma è stata sì la prima iniziativa con solide basi di partenza. L'impulso derivante dalle prime elezioni dirette del Parlamento Europeo nel 1979 è stato perciò di enorme importanza. Si è sentita subito la necessità di unire le forze, sia all'interno dell'istituzione – con un gruppo tecnico di coordinamento, almeno in prima istanza – sia al di fuori – con l'organizzazione verticistica ALE. Per molti tra coloro i quali non erano rappresentati nel Parlamento Europeo, l'ALE ha funzionato come portavoce nel forum europeo. Nel Parlamento Europeo c'erano alti e bassi ma i partner dell'ALE rimanevano percentualmente ai margini. La formazione di un proprio gruppo di regionalisti e nazionalisti non è mai andata in porto. Il cosiddetto gruppo dell'Arcobaleno (1989-1994) è quello che è andato più vicino ad un tale gruppo.

L'ALE si basa su due fondamentali principi: l'Europa da una parte, le regioni e le nazioni dall'altra: unità e diversità. Il processo di integrazione europeo che ha

contrassegnato la seconda metà del ventesimo secolo è stato portato a dialogare con il regionalismo, che nello stesso periodo ha conosciuto una rinascita. Detto in modo semplice l'idea dell'ALE è: un'Europa unita, federale e solidare, in cui le regioni e i popoli abbiano un uguale apporto e possano decidere su ciò che è di loro interesse (sussidiarietà).

È stata anche prestata attenzione a temi postmaterialistici come l'ambiente e la pace. Il pacifismo e l'assenza di violenza sono sempre stati una condizione che l'ALE ha posto a se stessa e a chi voleva diventarne membro. Nonostante ciò, è stato spesso come stare sul filo del rasoio. Giudizi sul terrorismo nei paesi Baschi o in Corsica sono sempre sfumati. Vengono radicalmente evitati legami con persone e/o organizzazioni che predicano o usano la violenza. Vale lo stesso per giudizi razzisti o xenofobi. Ciò è stato dimostrato quando è stata estromessa la Lega Nord dall'ALE nel 1994. La difesa della diversità viene sempre inquadrata all'interno dei diritti umani.

I principi di base dell'ALE – così come stabilito nella Carta di Bruxelles, la Dichiarazione di Bastia e la Dichiarazione della Convenzione di Bruxelles – sono stati passo dopo passo completati nelle giornate di studio che annualmente vengono dedicate

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ad un tema concreto (politiche agricole nel 1986 a Cardiff, politica sociale nel 1987 a Ljouwert, collaborazione di sviluppo nel 1988 in Sardegna e così via). Questo è stato anche il merito dell'ALE: nonostante il fatto che l'alleanza e il gruppo nel Parlamento Europeo fossero spesso composti da elementi molto diversi tra loro, si è trovato comunque un comune denominatore. Anche se questo era appena un *minimum minimorum*. Da qui si è messo a punto costantemente un programma in cui i partner dell'ALE si potessero ritrovare e che valesse per loro come base per le elezioni europee.

La strategia dell'ALE è stata sempre duplice. Da una parte c'è sempre stata una continua ricerca di allargamento; una ricerca mirata verso i partiti che come ideologia fossero sulla stessa lunghezza d'onda. L'ALE, come organizzazione verticistica, ci è riuscita. Ha saputo legare a sé altri partiti regionalisti e nazionalisti e attualmente ha 33 membri effettivi. Tra cui c'è un solo parlamentare europeo dei dieci paesi che nel 2004 sono diventati membri dell'UE. Nel Parlamento Europeo ci è riuscita meno. Periodi con relativamente più membri nel Parlamento Europeo si alternavano con periodi con pochi parlamentari europei. L'ingresso non è mai stato evidente, nonostante i contatti ufficiosi nel 1970. Quasi sempre c'è stato in precedenza un (esteso) periodo di trattative. L'ALE è stata per un lungo periodo una (libera) unione di collaborazione, un'alleanza. Negli anni novanta sono stati cambiati gli statuti e c'è stata più chiarezza su chi si potesse unire e con quali modalità. Nel 2004 l'ALE è stata formalmente 'ricostituita' come partito politico europeo, cosa che ha reso i legami più saldi tra i partiti e l'ALE.

Dall'altra si è teso all'indipendenza e ciò per quanto riguarda il modo di lavorare e l'ideologia. Benché l'ALE abbia cercato nel Parlamento – spesso per necessità – la col-

laborazione di altri partiti e/o di altri membri del Parlamento che non rientravano direttamente nell'ambito dell'ALE (Folkebevaegelsen mod EF, radicali italiani, Energie Radicale e così via), ha però sempre posto come condizione la sua posizione indipendente. Cooperazione non assimilazione.

La collaborazione con i Verdi nel Parlamento Europeo è quasi da considerarsi una costante nella storia dell'ALE. Una tale collaborazione è stata messa in atto data la numerosa presenza di tematiche verdi all'interno del programma dell'ALE. Così l'ALE era tra i leader della protesta contro l'energia nucleare. La collaborazione era anche logica nel senso che se ne sentiva la necessità da entrambe le parti. La strada era già stata spianata dal gruppo dell'Arcobaleno (1984-1989), in cui si sedevano dodici verdi e, dalle liste di coalizione, tra l'altro in Italia e in Francia nelle elezioni regionali e/o europee (per esempio nel 1989) come mezzo di salvataggio per superare la soglia elettorale. Dato il sempre maggior numero di membri necessari a formare un gruppo, era logico formare un gruppo tra i Verdi europei da una parte e i regionalisti e nazionalisti dall'altra nel 1999 e di nuovo nel 2004. Logico sì ma non per questo necessariamente evidente: si è dovuto vincere l'iniziale scetticismo di alcuni Verdi nei confronti del regionalismo e nazionalismo ed inoltre i Verdi erano numericamente preponderanti, cosa che ha anche conseguenze interne. Comunque sembra che l'ALE abbia trovato nei Verdi un buono partner.

L'ALE è stata innanzitutto un catalizzatore. È stata un utile strumento per i piccoli partiti – e ce ne sono molti tra i regionalisti e i nazionalisti – per portare nel forum europeo le loro richieste, i loro desideri e i loro interessi. Maurits Coppieters l'ha espresso una volta in modo conciso: "*Je serai votre député à Bruxelles*" ("Sarò il vostro

deputato a Bruxelles”). Questo strumento non è sempre parso per altro così efficiente o non si è tratto da esso il massimo beneficio. L’organizzazione di un partito politico europeo non è una cosa così semplice neanche nell’era elettronica.

D’altra parte anche i partiti sono importanti per l’ALE. E certamente adesso, dato che dal 2004 i partiti politici europei devono poter dimostrare di avere rappresentanti parlamentari in diversi paesi membri, è importante poter presentare tali credenziali. Il numero di membri dell’ALE ha anche conseguenze dal punto di vista economico. Perciò rimane di grande importanza il costante allargamento.

I Fiamminghi di Volksunie hanno avuto da subito un grande ruolo all’interno dell’ALE. Loro e in particolare Maurits Coppieters hanno dato il via a tutto, dopo le elezioni europee del 1979 e avevano anche esperienza nel parlamento e nel governo. Inoltre dal 1979 erano rappresentati nel Parlamento Europeo da Coppieters. In più i Fiamminghi avevano come ulteriore asso nella manica la posizione centrale di Bruxelles. L’elezione di Fiamminghi è stata una costante nel Parlamento Europeo fino alla fine degli anni novanta. Anche il presidente dell’ALE proveniva, i primi nove anni, da Volksunie. A causa di problemi interni Volksunie si è ritirato sempre più dal proscenio, e il suo posto è stato preso in un certo qual modo da partiti quali lo Scottish National Party e i partiti nello stato spagnolo. Infine Volksunie è sparito nel 2001 e ha provocato una certa agitazione degli altri partner circa il futuro dell’ALE.

Se bisogna fare un bilancio di 25 anni dell’ALE, allora si deve certamente tener conto dell’atmosfera poco accogliente in cui si è trovata a prendere le mosse all’inizio degli anni ottanta. Mentre nel 1980 una domanda al Parlamento Europeo sulla politica francese riguardo alla Corsica veniva

sentita come un’intromissione inopportuna e offensiva, le regioni sembrano poter dare la loro opinione nella convenzione per una Costituzione Europea. I partiti dell’ALE sono nel frattempo anche rappresentati in parlamenti regionali e/o nazionali, tra l’altro in Belgio, Francia e Spagna. Anche nel Regno Unito, la Scozia e il Galles dispongono dal 1999 di una loro ‘*Assembly*’, dove sono rappresentati i partiti nazionalisti.

L’ALE non ha mai potuto legare a sé tutti i regionalisti e i nazionalisti, raccogliarli tutti sotto ‘l’ombrello’. C’è infatti una grande differenza troppo grande tra loro. Il mancato ingresso di PNV (Paesi Baschi) e CDC (Catalogna) ha rallentato il progetto ALE nei primi anni. In alcuni casi (come Herri Batasuna e il Vlaams Blok) l’ingresso non è stato mai desiderato, perché in contraddizione con il programma dell’ALE. In questo senso l’ALE è sempre rimasta piccola, cosa che è incontrovertibilmente uno svantaggio in un Parlamento Europeo con più di 700 membri. Eppure l’ALE si è evoluta, da una libera unione di collaborazione a partito politico europeo. In ogni legislatura è stata presente, rappresentata nel Parlamento Europeo, in cui, per esempio nelle commissioni, ha difeso il suo programma con i mezzi, le persone e le risorse economiche di cui disponeva in quel momento.

L’ALE è stata ufficialmente costituita a Strasburgo il 9 luglio 1981. Nel maggio del 2006 ha festeggiato il suo venticinquesimo compleanno durante un’Assemblea Generale al Parlamento Europeo a Bruxelles. La distanza tra Strasburgo e Bruxelles non è poi così grande in verità, l’ALE ci ha messo venticinque anni ad evolversi da alleanza a partito politico europeo.

Der Weg zwischen Strassburg und Brüssel: der Europäischen Freien Allianz (1981-2006)

Die Geschichte der Europäischen Freien Allianz (EFA) begann bereits vor ihrer offiziellen Gründung in Strassburg im Juli 1981. Vordem bestanden bereits Kontakte zwischen verschiedenen europäischen nationalistischen und regionalistischen Bewegungen und Parteien. Die EFA war sicher nicht der erste Anlauf, auf europäischem Niveau die Idee eines Europas der Regionen zu verwirklichen, aber war wohl die erste Initiative, die sich durchsetzen konnte. Der Impuls, der von der ersten Direktwahl des Europäischen Parlaments im Jahre 1979 ausging, war dabei von wesentlicher Bedeutung. Die Notwendigkeit machte sich schnell bemerkbar, sowohl innerhalb der Institution – mit einer technischen Koordinationsfraktion, zumindest in erster Instanz – als außerhalb – mit der Dachorganisation EFA – die Kräfte zu bündeln. Die EFA selbst hat allmählich mehr Parteien an sich binden können. Für viele unter ihnen, die nicht im Europäischen Parlament vertreten waren, fungierte die EFA als Sprachrohr auf dem europäischen Forum. Im Europäischen Parlament gab es Höhen und Tiefen, aber die EFA-Partner bewegten sich dort prozentual stets am Rande. Die Bildung einer eigenen Fraktion von Nationalisten und Regionalisten ist nie geglückt. Die Regenbogenfraktion (1989-1994) kam einer solchen Fraktion noch am nächsten.

Die EFA stützt sich auf zwei Grundpfeiler: Europa auf der einen Seite, die Regionen und Nationen auf der anderen: Einheit und Vielfalt. Der europäische Integrationsprozess, der die zweite Hälfte des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts kennzeichnete, wurde auf diese Weise mit dem Regionalismus, der im gleichen Zeitraum wieder auflebte, ins Gespräch gebracht. Einfach gesagt, begründet der Kerngedanke der EFA auf Folgendem: ein vereintes, föderales und solidarisches Europa, in dem die Regionen und Völker einen gleichwertigen Beitrag leisten und über ihre eigenen Belange beschließen können (Subsidiarität).

Es wurden auch postmaterialistischen Themen wie Umwelt und Frieden berücksichtigt. Pazifismus und Gewaltlosigkeit waren stets eine Bedingung, die die EFA sich selbst und all denjenigen, die Mitglied werden wollten, auferlegt hat. Doch dies kam oft einer Gratwanderung gleich. Urteile über den Terrorismus im Baskenland oder in Korsika sind stets nuanciert. Lierungen mit Personen und/oder Organisationen, die Gewalt predigen oder einsetzen, werden radikal aus dem Weg gegangen. Dasselbe gilt für rassistische oder fremdenfeindliche Äußerungen. Dies wurde bewiesen, als die Lega Nord in 1994 aus der EFA ausgeschlossen wurde. Die Verteidigung der Vielfalt geschieht stets im Einklang mit den Menschenrechten.

Die Grundprinzipien der EFA – wie in der Charter von Brüssel, der Erklärung von Bastia und der Erklärung der Brüsseler Konvention festgelegt, wurden schrittweise an Studientagen ergänzt, die jährlich einem konkreten Thema gewidmet waren (Agrarpolitik 1986 in Cardiff, Sozialpolitik 1987 in Ljouwert, Zusammenarbeit mit den Entwicklungsländern 1988 in Sardinien, usw.). Dies war auch der Verdienst der EFA: Trotz der Tatsache, dass sich die Allianz und die Fraktion im Europäischen Parlament oft aus sehr unterschiedlichen Elementen zusammensetzte, wurde doch ein gemeinschaftlicher Nenner gefunden. Dieser stellte jedoch nur ein *minimum minimumorum* dar. Hierdurch kam stets ein Programm zustande, das allen EFA-Partnern gerecht wurde und das für sie die Grundlage bei den Europawahlen bildete.

Die Strategie der EFA war stets zweischneidig: Einerseits gibt es die kontinuierliche Suche nach Erweiterung; eine Suche nach Parteien, deren Ideologie sich auf derselben Wellenlänge befindet. Die EFA, als Dachorganisation, war hier erfolgreich. Sie hat andere nationalistische und regionalistische Parteien an sich binden können und zählt gegenwärtig 33 effektive Mitglieder. Darunter befindet sich nur ein EP-Mitglied aus den zehn Ländern, die 2004 EU-Mitglieder wurden. Im Europäischen Parlament hatte man hier weniger Erfolg. Zeiträume mit relativ vielen EP-Mitgliedern folgten Zeiträumen mit wenigen EP-Mitgliedern. Selbstverständlich war der Beitritt wohl nie, trotz inoffizieller Kontakte in den 70er Jahren; ihm ging fast immer ein (langwieriger) Verhandlungszeitraum voraus. Die EFA war lange Zeit eine (lose) Arbeitsgemeinschaft, eine Allianz. In den 90er Jahren wurde die Satzung geändert und schaffte mehr Klarheit darüber, welches Land sich anschließen konnte und über das Verfahren. 2004 wurde die EFA

in Barcelona als europäische politische Partei formell 'neu gegründet', was die Beziehungen zwischen den Parteien und der EFA vertiefte.

Andererseits besteht das Streben nach Unabhängigkeit, diesmal was das Funktionieren und die Ideologie anbetrifft. Obgleich die EFA im Parlament – oft nur ungerne – die Zusammenarbeit mit Parteien und/oder Parlamentsmitgliedern sucht, die nicht direkt in das Konzept der EFA passen (Folkebevaegelsen mod EF, italienische Radikal, Energie-Radicale, usw.) hat sie stets eine unabhängige Position eingenommen; Kooperation, nicht Assimilierung.

Die Zusammenarbeit mit den Grünen im Europäischen Parlament kann man fast als Konstante in der Geschichte der EFA bezeichnen. Einer solchen Zusammenarbeit wurde durch eine Anzahl grüner Themen Vorschub geleistet, die in dem EFA-Programm standen. So zählte die EFA zu den führenden Gegnern der Nuklearenergie. Die Zusammenarbeit war auch logisch in dem Sinne, dass diese beiderseitig als notwendig empfunden wurde. Der Weg wurde bereits durch die Regenbogenfraktion (1984-1989) geebnet, der zwölf Grüne angehörten, sowie durch die Kartellisten in u. a. Italien und Frankreich bei regionalen und/oder europäischen Wahlen (z.B. 1989) als Rettungsring, um die Prozentklausel erfüllen zu können. Angesichts der stets größeren Anzahl Mitglieder, die zur Bildung einer Fraktion notwendig sind, war die Bildung einer Fraktion im Jahre 1999 zwischen den Europäischen Grünen einerseits und den Nationalisten und Regionalisten andererseits, und wieder im Jahre 2004, ein logischer Schritt. Logisch, aber darum nicht unbedingt augenscheinlich: es galt die anfängliche Skepsis bei bestimmten Grünen gegenüber dem Nationalismus und Regionalismus zu überwinden, und es kam hinzu, dass die Grünen die Fraktion zahlenmäßig überwogen, was auch inter-

ne Konsequenzen hatte. Doch scheint die EFA in den Europäischen Grünen einen guten Sparringspartner gefunden zu haben.

Vor allem war die EFA ein Katalysator. Sie ist für kleine Parteien – und davon gibt es einige nationalistische und regionalistische – ein praktisches Instrument, um ihre Forderungen, Desiderata und Belange dem europäischen Forum vorzulegen. Maurits Coppieters resümierte es kurz und bündig: *“Je serai votre député à Bruxelles”* (Ich werde Ihr Abgeordneter in Brüssel sein). Dieses Instrument schien nicht immer gleich wirksam – oder es wurde jedenfalls nicht immer voll ausgenutzt. Die Organisation einer europäischen politischen Partei ist – selbst im Zeitalter der Elektronik – keine selbstverständliche Angelegenheit.

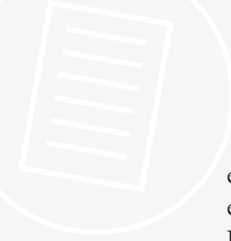
Andererseits sind auch die Parteien für die EFA von Belang. Sicher da die europäischen politischen Parteien seit 2004 beweisen mussten, dass sie parlamentarische Vertreter in verschiedenen Mitgliedstaaten haben, ist es wichtig, solche Beweise vorlegen zu können. Die Anzahl der EFA-Mitglieder hat auch in finanzieller Hinsicht Konsequenzen. Daher ist und bleibt auch die konstante Erweiterung von Bedeutung.

Die Flamen der Volksunie spielten von Anfang an eine wichtige Rolle innerhalb der EFA. Sie, und ganz besonders Maurits Coppieters, brachten nach den Europawahlen von 1979 den Ball ins Rollen und hatten auch Erfahrung im Parlament und in der Regierung gesammelt. Außerdem waren sie seit 1979 – durch Coppieters – im Europäischen Parlament vertreten. Hinzu kommt noch, dass die zentrale Lage von Brüssel ein Trumpf war, den die Flamen ausspielen konnten. Die flämischen Mandatsträger waren dann auch eine Konstante im Europäischen Parlament bis Ende der 90er Jahre. Auch der Vorsit-

zende der EFA kam die ersten neun Jahre aus der Volksunie (VU). Durch interne Probleme verlor die Volksunie jedoch stets mehr an Bedeutung und ihre Rolle wurde schlecht und recht von Parteien wie der Scottish National Party und den Parteien aus Spanien übernommen. Letztendlich verschwand die Volksunie im Jahre 2001 von der Bildfläche, was für einige Unruhe über die Zukunft der EFA bei den anderen Partnern sorgte.

Wenn man über die 25 Jahre der EFA Bilanz ziehen wollte, dann sollte man sicherlich die wenig aufgeschlossene Atmosphäre berücksichtigen, in der sie zu Beginn der 80er Jahre ihre Arbeit aufnahm. Empfund man im Jahre 1980 noch eine Frage über die französische Korsika-Politik im Europäischen Parlament als unpassende und beleidigende Einmischung, scheinen die Regionen ihren Beitrag zu dem Konvent für eine europäische Verfassung leisten zu können. EFA-Parteien sind inzwischen auch vertreten in regionalen und/oder nationalen Parlamenten, u. a. in Belgien, Frankreich, und Spanien. Auch im Vereinigten Königreich verfügen Schottland und Wales seit 1999 über eine eigene Assembly (Versammlung), in der die nationalistischen Parteien vertreten sind.

Die EFA hat nie alle Nationalisten und Regionalisten an sich binden können, unter dem “Paraplu” vereinen können. Dafür sind die Unterschiede zwischen ihnen zu groß. Dass sie die PNV (Baskenland) und CDC (Katalonien) nicht für sich gewinnen konnte, hat den Elan des EFA-Projekts anfänglich verlangsamt. In einigen Fällen (wie Herri Batasuna und der Vlaams Blok) war der Beitritt hingegen niemals erwünscht, ja lief dem Programm der EFA zuwider. In dieser Hinsicht ist die EFA immer kleinlich geblieben, was in einem Europäischen Parlament mit mehr als 700 Mitgliedern unbestreitbar von Nachteil ist. Dennoch avancierte die EFA von



einer losen Arbeitsgemeinschaft zu einer europäischen politischen Partei. In jeder Legislaturperiode war sie aktiv im Europäischen Parlament vertreten, wo man – z.B. in den Ausschüssen – das Programm mit den Mitteln – Personen und Finanzen – verteidigte, die zu dem Zeitpunkt zur Verfügung standen.

Die EFA wurde offiziell am 9. Juli 1981 in Strassburg gegründet. Im Mai 2006 feierte sie ihr fünfundzwanzigjähriges Bestehen während einer Plenarversammlung im Europäischen Parlament in Brüssel. Der Abstand zwischen Strassburg und Brüssel mag in Wirklichkeit nicht so groß sein, die EFA aber benötigte fünfundzwanzig Jahre, um sich von einer Allianz zu einer europäischen politischen Partei zu entwickeln.

Le chemin entre Strasbourg et Bruxelles: L'Alliance libre européenne (1981-2006)

L'histoire de l'Alliance libre européenne (ALE) a débuté bien avant sa fondation officielle, à Strasbourg, en juillet 1981. Des contacts avaient déjà été noués, auparavant, entre divers mouvements et partis régionalistes et nationalistes européens. L'ALE ne fut certes pas la première tentative de concrétiser l'idée d'une Europe des Régions au niveau européen mais reste, cependant, la première initiative pour sérieusement y parvenir. L'impulsion que suscitèrent les premières élections au suffrage universel du Parlement européen, en 1979, fut d'une importance cruciale à cet égard. La nécessité d'unir les forces se fit rapidement sentir tant au sein de l'institution, avec un groupe de coordination technique, qu'en dehors, avec l'ALE. L'ALE put progressivement rallier davantage de partis. Pour nombre d'entre eux, qui n'étaient pas représentés au Parlement européen, l'ALE jouait un rôle de porte-parole dans le débat européen. Il y a certes eu des hauts et des bas au Parlement européen mais la représentation de l'ALE a toujours pu être assurée. Aucun groupe spécifique de régionalistes et de nationalistes n'a jamais pu être formé. C'est le groupe Arc-en-ciel (1989-1994) qui a finalement approché cet objectif du plus près.

L'ALE repose sur deux piliers fondamentaux : l'Europe, d'une part, et les régions et nations, d'autre part : l'unité et la

diversité. Le processus européen d'intégration qui a marqué la seconde moitié du vingtième siècle est, de cette manière, mis à l'unisson du régionalisme qui connut une résurgence durant la même période. Pour simplifier, l'idée centrale de l'ALE est celle d'une Europe unifiée, fédérale et solidaire dans laquelle les régions et les peuples ont un apport équivalent et peuvent décider dans les matières qui les concernent (subsidiarité).

L'accent fut également mis sur d'autres thèmes prioritaires tels que l'environnement et la paix. Le pacifisme et la non-violence ont été deux valeurs auxquelles l'ALE a toujours adhéré. Un exercice qui s'est néanmoins souvent révélé périlleux. Les prises de position quant au terrorisme au Pays Basque ou en Corse sont toujours nuancées mais fermes. Toute compromission avec des personnes et/ou des organisations prônant ou utilisant la violence est radicalement rejetée. La même intransigeance vaut pour les propos racistes ou xénophobes. Cela se confirma en 1994, lorsque la Lega Nord fut exclue de l'ALE. La défense de la diversité a toujours été considérée comme partie intégrante des droits de l'homme.

Les principes fondamentaux de l'ALE, tels que définis par la Charte de Bruxelles, la Déclaration de Bastia et la Déclaration

de la Convention de Bruxelles, ont progressivement été complétés lors de journées d'étude qui ont, chaque année, abordé une thématique concrète (la politique agricole, en 1986 à Cardiff ; la politique sociale, en 1987 à Ljouwert ; la coopération au développement, en 1988 en Sardaigne, etc.). Tel est aussi le mérite de l'ALE : en dépit de l'hétérogénéité des composantes de l'alliance et du groupe au Parlement européen, un dénominateur commun put néanmoins être trouvé. Un programme dans lequel tous les partenaires de l'ALE peuvent se retrouver et dont ils peuvent en faire usage lors des élections européennes.

La stratégie de l'ALE a toujours été double. Elle s'est, d'une part, continuellement axée sur l'élargissement à des partis dont l'idéologie est en ligne avec celle de l'alliance. L'ALE y est parvenue en tant qu'organisation fédératrice. Elle a pu rallier d'autres partis régionalistes et nationalistes et compte actuellement 33 membres effectifs. La représentation au Parlement européen est plus contrastée. Les périodes fastes, caractérisées par de nombreux élus, ont alterné avec des périodes plus difficiles. L'ALE a longtemps été un (libre) accord de coopération, une alliance. Dans les années 1990, ses statuts furent modifiés et les modalités d'adhésion et de fonctionnement furent améliorées. Seul l'un de ces parlementaires actuels est issu des dix pays qui ont adhéré à l'UE en 2004. En 2004, l'ALE fut formellement « refondée » en tant que parti politique à Barcelone, ce qui permit de renforcer les liens entre les partis et l'ALE.

L'ALE vise, d'autre part, à assurer sa visibilité et son indépendance. Bien que l'ALE ait, souvent à contrecœur, cherché au Parlement à collaborer avec des partis et/ou des parlementaires ne partageant pas directement sa ligne (Folkebevaegelsen mod EF, Radicaux Italiens, Energie Ra-

dicale, etc.), elle a toujours défendu une position indépendante. La coopération... mais pas l'assimilation.

La collaboration avec les Verts, au Parlement européen, est quasiment une constante dans l'histoire de l'ALE. Cette collaboration fut grandement facilitée par l'abondance des thèmes environnementaux figurant au programme de l'ALE. L'ALE fut, à cet égard, parmi les premiers à agir contre l'énergie nucléaire. Cette collaboration était également logique en ce sens que sa nécessité s'avéra réciproque. La voie en fut déjà tracée avec le groupe « Arc-en-ciel » (1984-1989) dans lequel siégeaient 12 écologistes et par la mise en place des listes communes constituées, notamment en France, à l'occasion des élections régionales et/ou européennes (par exemple en 1989) comme moyen d'atteindre les seuils électoraux. Le nombre toujours croissant de membres nécessaires à la formation d'un groupe explique également que la formation d'un groupe entre les Verts européens, d'une part, et les nationalistes et les régionalistes, d'autre part, s'avéra une étape logique en 1999 et en 2004. Une étape logique, certes... mais pas nécessairement évidente : il fallut surmonter le scepticisme initial de certains Verts à l'égard du régionalisme et nationalisme. Les Verts sont, en outre, numériquement prédominants dans le groupe, ce qui a aussi des conséquences internes. L'ALE semble toutefois avoir trouvé dans les Verts européens un bon partenaire.

A tous points de vue, l'ALE a toujours été un catalyseur. Elle constitue, notamment pour les petits, un instrument pratique pour relayer leurs exigences, leurs revendications et leurs intérêts dans le débat européen. Maurits Coppieters l'exprima un jour avec concision : « *Je serai votre député à Bruxelles* ». Cet instrument n'a pourtant pas toujours semblé aussi efficace – ou

n'a, pour le moins, pas toujours été pleinement exploité. Même à l'ère de l'électronique, l'organisation d'un parti politique européen est tout sauf une évidence.

Les partis importent, d'autre part, pour l'ALE. Pouvoir présenter de telles lettres de noblesse est d'autant plus important depuis 2004, année depuis laquelle les partis politiques européens doivent pouvoir démontrer qu'ils ont une représentation parlementaire dans divers Etats membres. Le nombre de membres de l'ALE a également des conséquences sur le plan financier. Autant de raisons qui illustrent l'importance qu'a toujours eu et que continue à avoir l'élargissement permanent.

Les Flamands de la Volksunie ont joué un rôle capital au sein de l'ALE. Ils lancèrent, plus particulièrement Maurits Coppieters, le mouvement après les élections européennes de 1979 et avaient déjà une longue expérience parlementaire et gouvernemental. Ils étaient, en outre, représentés au Parlement européen par Coppieters depuis 1979. La situation centrale de Bruxelles fut un autre atout dont les Flamands purent jouer. Les élu(e)s flamand(e)s furent donc une constante au Parlement européen jusqu'à la fin des années 1990. Pendant les neuf premières années, le président de l'ALE était lui-même issu de la Volksunie. Suite à des problèmes internes, la Volksunie s'effaça peu à peu de l'avant-scène et des partis tels que le Scottish National Party et les partis de l'état espagnol reprirent son rôle d'aiguillon. La Volksunie disparut finalement en 2001, ce qui suscita un certain émoi quant à l'avenir de l'ALE.

A l'heure de tirer le bilan de 25 ans d'ALE, il convient assurément de tenir compte du contexte peu réceptif dans lequel elle vit le jour, au début des années 1980. Alors que la moindre question quant à la politique française en Corse était encore perçue, au Parlement européen, en 1980,

comme une ingérence déplacée et injurieuse, les régions semblent aujourd'hui avoir eu leur mot à dire pendant la Convention pour une Constitution Européenne. Les partis de l'ALE sont, depuis, également représentés aux Parlements régionaux et/ou nationaux, notamment en Belgique, en France et en Espagne. Au Royaume Uni, l'Ecosse et le Pays de Galles disposent, depuis 1999, de leur propre assemblée où les partis nationalistes sont représentés.

L'ALE n'a jamais pu rallier tous les régionalistes et nationalistes sous son étendard. Ceci s'est avéré être un inconvénient. Leurs positions sont trop divergentes pour y parvenir. Ne pas avoir pu rallier le PNV (Pays Basque) et le CDC (Catalogne) a ralenti le projet de l'ALE au début de son existence. Dans certains cas (tels que Herri Batasuna et le Vlaams Blok), l'adhésion n'était jamais souhaitée parce que contradictoire avec le programme de l'ALE. En ce sens, l'ALE est toujours restée un mouvement de petite ampleur, ce qui s'avère un indéniable inconvénient dans un Parlement européen de plus de 700 membres. L'ALE a toutefois évolué pour passer d'un libre accord de coopération à un parti politique européen. Elle fut représentée, à chaque législature, au Parlement européen et y a défendu son programme avec les moyens humains et financiers dont elle disposait alors.

L'ALE a été officiellement fondée à Strasbourg, le 9 juillet 1981. En mai 2006, elle a fêté son vingt-cinquième anniversaire lors d'une Assemblée Générale à l'hémicycle du Parlement européen, à Bruxelles. La distance entre Strasbourg et Bruxelles n'est peut-être pas énorme dans les faits, mais pour l'ALE, ces vingt-cinq ans ont signifié une évolution essentielle. D'une alliance, elle est devenue un parti politique européen.

De weg tussen Straatsburg en Brussel: de Europese Vrije Alliantie (1981-2006)

De geschiedenis van de Europese Vrije Alliantie (EVA) begon reeds voor haar officiële oprichting in Straatsburg in juli 1981. Voorheen waren er reeds contacten tussen diverse Europese nationalistische en regionalistische bewegingen en partijen. De EVA was zeker niet de eerste poging om op Europees niveau de idee van het Europa van de Regio's te verwezenlijken, maar was wel het eerste initiatief dat voet aan de grond kreeg. De impuls die uitging van de eerste rechtstreekse verkiezing van het Europees Parlement in 1979 was daarbij van wezenlijk belang. De noodzaak werd al vlug gevoeld om de krachten te bundelen. In het Europees Parlement in een technische coördinatiefractie, daarbuiten in de EVA-koepelorganisatie. De EVA zelf heeft geleidelijk steeds meer partijen aan zich kunnen binden. Voor vele onder hen, die niet in het Europees Parlement waren vertegenwoordigd, functioneerde de EVA als spreekbuis op het Europese forum. In het Europees Parlement waren er ups en downs, maar de EVA-partners bleven er procentueel steeds in de marge. Het vormen van een eigen fractie van nationalistische en regionalistische partijen is nooit gelukt. De Regenboogfractie (1989-1994) benaderde zulk een fractie nog het dichtst.

De EVA steunt op twee fundamentele pijlers: Europa aan de ene kant, de naties en regio's en aan de andere. Eenheid én

diversiteit. Het Europese integratieproces dat de tweede helft van de twintigste eeuw kenmerkte, wordt op die manier in dialoog gebracht met het regionalisme, dat in diezelfde periode een heropleving kende. Eenvoudig gezegd, komt de centrale idee van de EVA neer op het volgende: een eengemaakt, federaal en solidair Europa, waarin de regio's en volkeren een gelijkwaardige inbreng hebben en kunnen beslissen over dat wat hen aanbelangt (subsidiariteit).

Aandacht werd ook besteed aan post-materialistische thema's zoals het milieu en aan vrede. Het pacifisme en de geweldloosheid is steeds een voorwaarde geweest die de EVA heeft opgelegd aan zichzelf en aan allen die lid willen worden. Toch was het vaak dansen op een slappe koord. Uitspraken over het terrorisme in Baskenland of Corsica zijn steeds genuanceerd. Enige liëring met personen en/of organisaties die geweld prediken of gebruiken wordt radicaal uit de weg gegaan. Hetzelfde geldt voor racistische of xenofobe uitspraken. Dat werd aangetoond toen de Lega Nord in 1994 uit de EVA werd gezet. Het verdedigen van de diversiteit werd steeds ingekaderd in de context van de mensenrechten.

De grondbeginselen van de EVA – zoals vastgelegd in het Charter van Brussel, de Declaratie van Bastia en de Verklaring van de Conventie van Brussel – werden stapsgewijze

ABSTRACT

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wijs aangevuld op de jaarlijkse studiedagen die waren gewijd aan een concreet thema (Landbouwbeleid in 1986 in Cardiff, sociale politiek in 1987 in Ljouwert, ontwikkelingsamenwerking in 1987 in Sardinië enz.). Dit is ook de verdienste geweest van de EVA: ondanks het feit dat de alliantie en de fractie in het Europees Parlement vaak waren samengesteld uit heel uiteenlopende elementen, werd toch een gemeenschappelijke noemer gevonden. Ook al was die slechts een *minimum minimorum*. Hierdoor kwam gestaag een program tot stand waarin alle EVA-partners zich konden vinden en dat voor hen gold als basis bij de Europese verkiezingen.

De strategie van de EVA was steeds tweeledig. Enerzijds is er de continue zoektocht naar uitbreiding geweest; een zoektocht naar partijen die qua ideologie op eenzelfde golflengte zitten. De EVA is daar als koepelorganisatie in geslaagd. Zij heeft andere nationalistische en regionalistische partijen aan zich weten te binden en telt momenteel 33 effectieve leden. Uit de tien landen die in 2004 lid zijn geworden van de EU, is er slechts één Europarlementslid. In het Europees Parlement daarentegen, werden periodes met relatief veel verkozenen afgewisseld met periodes met weinig. Vanzelfsprekend is de toetreding echter nooit geweest, ondanks het bestaan van officieuze contacten in de jaren 1970. Bijna steeds ging er een (uitgebreide) periode van onderhandelen aan vooraf. De EVA was lange tijd een (los) samenwerkingsverband, een alliantie. In de jaren negentig werden de statuten veranderd en kwam er meer klaarheid in wie kon aansluiten en hoe dat moest. In 2004 werd de EVA in Barcelona formeel 'heropgericht' als Europese politieke partij, wat de banden tussen de partijen en de EVA strakker maakt.

Anderzijds is er het streven naar onafhankelijkheid, concreet wat werking en ideologie betreft. Hoewel de EVA in het Par-

lement – vaak node – samenwerking zocht met partijen en/of parlementsleden die niet direct in het plaatje van de EVA thuishoorden (Folkebevaegelsen mod EF, Italiaanse radicalen, Energie Radicale enz.), heeft ze steeds een onafhankelijke positie bedongen. Coöperatie, niet assimilatie.

De samenwerking met de Groenen in het Europees Parlement is bijna een constante te noemen in de geschiedenis van de EVA. Zo'n samenwerking werd in de hand gewerkt door het aantal groene thema's dat in het EVA-programma stond. Zo was de EVA bij de koplopers om te ageren tegen nucleaire energie. Die samenwerking was ook logisch in die zin dat er een wederzijdse noodzaak voor werd gevoeld. Het pad was reeds geëffend door de Regenboogfractie (1984-1989) waarin twaalf groenen zetelden, en door de kartellijsten in o.a. Italië en Frankrijk bij regionale en/of Europese verkiezingen (bijvoorbeeld in 1989) als redmiddel om de kiesdrempel te kunnen halen. Gezien de steeds grotere aantallen leden die nodig zijn voor een fractie, was het vormen van een fractie tussen Europese Groenen enerzijds en nationalistische en regionalistische anderzijds in 1999, en opnieuw in 2004 een logische stap. Logisch maar daarom niet noodzakelijk evident: de aanvankelijke scepsis bij bepaalde Groenen ten opzichte van het nationalisme en regionalisme moest worden overwonnen. En daarbij komt dat de Groenen numeriek de fractie overwegen, wat ook interne consequenties heeft. Toch lijkt de EVA in de Europese Groenen een goede sparringpartner te hebben gevonden.

Voor alles is de EVA een katalysator geweest. Ze is voor kleine partijen – en zo zijn er onder de nationalistische en regionalistische een aantal – een handig instrumentum om hun eisen, desiderata en belangen op het Europese forum te krijgen. Maurits Coppieters verwoordde het ooit

bondig: “*Je serai votre député à Bruxelles*” (Ik zal uw parlamentslid zijn in Brussel). Dit instrument is echter niet altijd even efficiënt gebleken – of het werd althans niet steeds tenvolle benut. De organisatie van een Europese politieke partij is – zelfs in het elektronisch tijdperk – een niet-van-zelfsprekende zaak.

Anderzijds zijn ook de partijen van belang voor de EVA. Zeker nu sinds 2004 de Europese politieke partijen moeten kunnen bewijzen dat ze parlementaire vertegenwoordigers hebben in diverse lidstaten, is het van belang dergelijke adelsbrieven te kunnen voorleggen. Het aantal leden van de EVA heeft ook op financieel vlak consequenties. Vandaar ook dat de constante uitbreiding van belang is en blijft.

De Vlamingen van de Volksunie speelden van meet af een belangrijke rol binnen de EVA. Zij, en dan in het bijzonder Maurits Coppieters, brachten na de Europese verkiezingen van 1979 de bal aan het rolen en zij hadden ook ervaring in het parlement én in de regering. Bovendien waren ze sinds 1979 vertegenwoordigd – door Coppieters – in het Europees Parlement. Daarbij komt nog dat de centrale ligging van Brussel een troef was die de Vlamingen konden uitspelen. De Vlaamse verkozenen waren dan ook een constante in het Europees Parlement, tot einde jaren negentig. De Volksunie leverde de eerste negen jaar de voorzitter van de EVA. Door interne problemen trad de Volksunie echter steeds meer weg van het voorplan en werd haar rol enigszins overgenomen door partijen als Scottish National Party en de partijen uit Spanje. Uiteindelijk verdween de Volksunie in 2001 en dat zorgde voor een vage onrust over de toekomst van de EVA bij de andere partners.

Wanneer het bilan moet worden opgemaakt van 25 jaar EVA, dan dient zeker rekening te worden gehouden met de weinig

ontvankelijke sfeer waarin ze aan het begin van de jaren tachtig van start ging. Waar in 1980 een vraag over het Franse Corsica-beleid in het Europees Parlement nog werd ervaren als een ongepaste en beledigende inmenging, blijken de regio's hun zeg te kunnen doen in de Conventie voor een Europese Grondwet. EVA-partijen zijn ondertussen ook vertegenwoordigd in regionale en/of nationale parlementen o.a. in België, Frankrijk en Spanje. Ook in het Verenigd Koninkrijk beschikken Schotland en Wales sinds 1999 over een eigen ‘*assembly*’, waarin de nationalistische partijen vertegenwoordigd zijn.

De EVA heeft nooit alle nationalisten en regionalisten aan zich kunnen binden, onder de “paraplu” kunnen verzamelen. Daarvoor verschillen zij onderling te veel. Het niet kunnen binnenhalen van PNV (Baskenland) en CDC (Catalonië) heeft het EVA-project in de beginjaren even vertraagd. In sommige gevallen (zoals Herri Batasuna en Vlaams Blok) was toetreding dan weer nooit gewenst, zelfs in tegenstrijd met het programma van de EVA. In die zin is de EVA altijd kleinschalig gebleven, wat ontegensprekelijk een nadeel is in een Europees Parlement met meer dan 700 leden. Toch is de EVA geëvolueerd van een los samenwerkingsverband tot een Europese politieke partij. In elke legislatuur was ze aanwezig vertegenwoordigd in het Europees Parlement waar men – bijvoorbeeld in de commissies – het programma heeft verdedigd met de middelen – personen en financiën – die het op dat moment had.

De EVA werd officieel opgericht in Straatsburg op 9 juli 1981. In mei 2006 vierde ze haar vijftiende jaar bestaan tijdens een Algemene Vergadering in het Europees Parlement te Brussel. De afstand tussen Straatsburg en Brussel mag in werkelijkheid dan niet zo groot zijn, de EVA deed er vijftiende jaar over om te evo-



lueren van een alliantie tot een Europese
politieke partij.

NL ABSTRACT

The future of the EUROPEAN FREE ALLIANCE (EFA) European Political Party

The 25th anniversary of the European Free Alliance (EFA) is a significant occasion. The European Union is still in crisis after the referendums in the Netherlands and France that rejected the constitutional treaty. After its biggest enlargement with 10 new member states, the EU is currently negotiating with Romania and Bulgaria who are tentatively set to become members in 2007. Negotiations with Turkey have been initiated while the EU has no clear outlook of its own constitutional future and what are to be its definitive borders.

It has been over a year since the EFA was recognised as a political party at European level with the member parties holding out high expectations regarding their right to self-determination and their future role in the building of a democratic Europe from the patchwork of regions and nations with their cultures and languages.

Since looking back upon our common history as progressive parties is not the goal of our European Political Party, we want to reflect upon the future of the EFA and on the future of Europe as a whole in order to make Europe a place where the diversity of the peoples of Europe is the principle on which a democratic Europe should be built.

In the run-up to the General Assembly of the 11th of May 2006, where the European Free Alliance will be celebrating its 25th anniversary, some reflection is needed. The book set to be published and presented that day, will review and look back on the history of the EFA.

The historic study compiled by ADVN, the centre for archives, documentation and research on nationalism in Europe, outlines the specific ideology of the EFA, next to offering an overview of EFA's the accomplishments and failures in recent years.

“How could we be nationalists, without thinking of it as creating Europe?”¹

Structure of the chapter: 1. EFA accomplishments and future projections. 1.1. A Europe closer to the citizens. a) Self-determination ; b) Glocalization Globalisation and subsidiarity. c) EU reforms. d) Justice, economic and social progresses. 1.2. Europe of diversity.

a) Languages and cultures. b) United in diversity. c) Solidarity. 1.3. A safer planet for our children. a) Environment and sustainability. b) Human Rights. c) Pacifism. 2. Future Generations. 3. A strategy for the future. 4. Conclusion.

EFA accomplishments and future projections

These are very good times for reflecting on the future of the EFA. Times in which Europe itself is in the process of discussing and formulating its own future. One question we could ask ourselves would be what the European Union (EU) would look like nowadays if the EFA had not existed. Which, by extension, also means: where has the EFA been successful and where does it still face a lot of work ahead in order to lead the EU into a better direction?

The EFA is a European Political Party which unites **progressive, democratic, nationalist, regionalist and autonomist parties in the European Union.**

1.1. A Europe closer to the citizens

a) Self-determination and identity

Nations, Regions and stateless nations have the right to choose their own future in accordance with the democratic will of the free people. The scope of autonomy within the framework of a state is up to themselves to define as part of a democratic process without resorting to violence and bringing to bear all and every pacifist means available to them.

The identity of regions and nations has to be recognised by the EU institutions and treated with respect. If only member states can be truly respected, even the smallest nations and regions will view this as an invitation to become independent states. The EFA is confident that the idea of multiple identities of citizens in the modern global world and the reality of multilayered governance inspires the creation of solutions developing modern, democratic, European institutions. The EFA is convinced that a real EU “united in diversity” can only become a reality if it is able to overcome the selfish view of the member states. Nations, regions, autonomous regions, stateless nations and small member states all struggle with the same lack of respect from the EU institutions. They all have the same fight to continue. Specifically on the situation of the smaller nations, the EFA does not see it as a necessity to pursue the goal of creating mini member states within the EU. The real aim is to implement subsidiarity and to improve the democratic level of the Union.

The members of the EFA have always subscribed to the **right of peoples to self-determination** and have adhered to the principles of parliamentary democracy and human rights. Although in theory agreeing with the right of peoples to self-determination, the European Union is not very clear in its daily policies in applying this right and in implementing this right into its future policies. Currently, many stateless nations in Europe are unrecognised by their centralist state systems and are kept in a twilight zone. The EFA believes this needs to change.

b) Globalisation and subsidiarity

From its very incipience, **subsidiarity** has been a key element in the EFA's political platform, long before the EU institutions even ventured to address this debate. From the beginning, the EFA advocated "a European Union of free peoples based on the principle of subsidiarity, who believe in solidarity with each other and other peoples of the world". Today, "bringing Europe closer to the citizens" is on everybody's lips. All too often, this amounts to little more than the European Commission starting an image building campaign, much like any commercial campaign. Which in turn only serves to reinforce the widely held public view that Europe is growing increasingly immune to criticism. Subsidiarity is not implemented with an informative campaign; on the contrary, subsidiarity means real decentralisation, enabling citizens to decide how a wide range of different policies are to be developed at grassroots level. The EU institutions are there for the people, not vice versa. The EU must direct itself towards the people; it is not the people who have to direct themselves to the EU. For future reference, the EFA would do well to consider strategies on how to make the concept of subsidiarity more attractive.

The process of decentralisation within the EU is gaining impetus. **Think globally, act locally.** We believe that both in a globalising world and in an EU which is becoming bigger and bigger, the "**glocalised**" (local basis in a globalised world) reality will become more and more real. The EFA must contribute to this by stressing the importance of identity in this inevitable process.

c) EU reforms

The Declaration of Brussels (1981) outlined a two-tracked strategy for the EFA. The EFA supported building a **Federal Europe** to establish a political authority to implement European policies whilst at the same time acknowledging the reality of a **Regional Europe** by respecting the autonomy of Europe's peoples and regions. According to the EFA, Europe is still too much of a centralised unitarian model that shows little respect for its regions. Although the text of the Constitution of Europe mentions the reality of regions, it does not consider the regions as the cornerstone of the European construction. The EFA wants to secure the participation of the regions that have constitutional powers in meetings of the Council of Ministers related to matters that fall within their competence, in order to enhance the recognition of historical nations and regions. The EFA also demands direct access for historical nations and regions with constitutional powers to the Court of Justice and democratic reforms of the European institutions and the strengthening of the role of the Committee of the Regions.

One of the main objectives of the EFA is to provide democratic nationalism and regionalism with a political structure which allows scope for practical initiatives at the European level. The EFA ensures a due role in European politics for parties which, due to the electoral system, their own size or the size of the geographical area they represent, would inevitably be excluded from that arena. As of 1979, regionalist and nationalists met in the European Parliament after the first direct elections. In Corsica, the first president of the EFA, Maurits Coppieters (VU), declared: "I will be the Corsicans' voice in Europe". Today, the EFA remains "**the voice in Europe for the voiceless peoples**".

d) Justice, Economic and Social progresses

From the founding of the EFA on it was clear that all our members fight for **justice and social progress**. They always rejected selfish liberalism. Regardless of the economical growth of the last few decades, it is not at all clear what the social growth was. The references in the text of the Constitution to social issues must be upheld as the bare minimum for future negotiations. The EFA wants to forestall an EU that waters down social rights and social protection. The construction of a fair society with political solidarity which encourages progress, social cohesion and equal opportunities remains a priority for the EFA. Moreover, European solidarity must lead to better opportunities for poorer regions.

The **economic policy principles** of the EFA have always focused more on well-being than on production rates and growth. Creating more quality jobs and developing new technologies should be a priority. Which is why the EFA believes that higher priority should be given to redirecting European political action towards **social and regional policy**. The EFA is able to contribute to help redirect the European Union, which is overly-influenced by its economic conception and which tends to place too much emphasis on pursuing policies of deregulation, competition and centralisation. The EU must be more than an economic marketplace but it cannot be allowed to become a monolithic superstate. The European Union must be the house of peace and democracy where free peoples join forces for justice, freedom and peace in the world.

1.2. Europe of diversity and solidarity

a) Languages and cultures

The EFA stands for solidarity between the peoples, languages and cultures in Europe. National, regional and cultural identity and self-determination is vital to all members of the EFA. To the EFA, defending and guarding the **diversity of languages and cultures in the EU** is the cornerstone for the construction of a democratic and united Europe.

All languages have the right to be recognised at European level - regardless of their status in individual member states -, with no artificial difference between state languages and other languages. The EFA will continue to pursue the meaningful realisation of European cultural and linguistic diversity and equality of all European languages. To this end, the EFA will work towards establishing legally binding instruments and budgets for the promotion, development and normalisation of Europe's minoritised and stateless languages. Efa stands for a free access and no discrimination of minorities in the media, film, literature and culture.

b) United in diversity

The EFA considers that there is a direct and strong link between the notions of "language diversity" and "cultural diversity". These concepts are gaining increasing acceptance.² "United in diversity" is the motto of the European Union. It first came into use around the year 2000 and was officially mentioned for the first time in the Treaty establishing a constitution for Europe, which was signed in 2004. The motto means that, via the EU, Europeans are united in working together for peace and prosperity, and that the

many different cultures, traditions and languages in Europe are a positive asset for the continent.

We believe that it will take many decades to horizontally implement this into all European policies. Moreover, we must not forget that languages and cultures are not static actors; on the contrary they are subject to change and constant evolution. According to UNESCO, many languages (Breton, Corsican, ...) are now endangered and those that are not in danger at present could well become threatened with extinction in the future. A good example could be the Dutch language. Although spoken by 24 million EU citizens, the first signs are that the use of Dutch is on the decline.

c) Solidarity

Solidarity with peoples all over the world is a logical extension of the EFA's conception of the right to self-determination. An increasing body of issues in the European Union are affecting people on the other side of the planet. A fair trade system and fair labour cooperation system is needed. Our solidarity must be embedded into a holistic view tackling the problems that occur in this globalised world, our solidarity should not be restricted to the European continent. The millennium goals should be implemented and we should "Make Poverty History". The EFA cannot and will not turn a blind eye to the synergy of movements who try to tackle the issues of the globalised economy. That would be a historic mistake.

1.3. A safer planet and better rights for our children

a) Environment and sustainability

More and more regions where the EFA has member parties are declaring themselves GMO-free (Brittany, Aosta Valley...). More than ever, **environmental protection and sustainable development** are needed to ensure that a regional Europe can also be a reality for the children of the EFA, for the next generations. The EFA continues to fight for the abolition of nuclear energy and for the development of alternative energies.

In the early eighties of the last century, the notion of biodiversity was introduced into the political discourse. It took more than a decade and UNDP conferences in Rio and Kyoto to introduce biodiversity to the citizens. The people in the streets are convinced of the need to defend our biodiversity, but the real work of implementing biodiversity as part of policies that are co-ordinated on a worldwide level will take a lot more time than the introduction of the very concept itself.

b) Human rights

A safer planet for our children also means improving the due application of human rights. Only when the planet is environmentally safe and only when human rights are fully respected, only then will we be able to offer the next generations any form of guarantee of a future. The EFA is also the voice of those whose **fundamental human rights** are violated. Sadly, in many countries (old and new member states), breaches of essential human rights such as the freedom of association and the freedom of speech are common practice. Often, the European institutions declare not to have any say in the internal affairs

of member states or, whenever human rights are found to be used in candidate countries seeking EU membership, the institutions are easily deceived with vague legislation being put in place which subsequently fails to be implemented or which is unequally applied. Currently, highly unfair situations continue to exist in many EU countries relating to basic human rights, particularly in terms of setting up and managing political parties. The EU is currently held up as a shining example of democracy and respect to the world, but these facts need to be addressed and duly analysed and the reality changed if the EU wants to remain being the example of good practices.

c) Pacifism

The EFA has always been an alliance of parties who value peace, who have invariably followed the **peaceful path** and a strategy of non-violence. This has always been compatible with the EU and its economic integration as a means and stability and peace as a goal. Nowadays, very often it seems that EU integration has developed to become too much of a unique goal in itself, focusing only on economic growth. The EFA wants to spell out the maxim of PEACE AND STABILITY in capital letters again. The EFA will pursue democratic political activities in a non-violent way. Freedom, peace, disarmament and anti-nuclear issues remain at the heart of the party. Without peace there is no future. The EU must contribute more to peaceful political solutions for long-lasting conflicts in the Middle East. The EFA condemns the model of a world dominated by superpowers that use war as an accepted way to maintain their supremacy.

We are in a crucial time frame, with the EU institutions in the process of analysing the future of the Union and the European Commission launching a scheme referred to as **PLAN D3** (Democracy, Dialogue and Debate) that is to lay the foundations for an in-depth debate on Europe's future. Faced with French and Dutch 'no' votes on the European Constitution, heads of government have called for a "period of reflection" to enable a broad debate to take place in each member state. In this crucial time frame, the EFA has a role to play. We encourage the European Commission to pursue its plan D but we demand that the letter D also implies the concepts of **Diversity and Decentralisation**.

Currently, the EFA has representatives in **13 member states of the EU and numbers 33 member parties** with more than 200 elected representatives at European, national and regional levels. Between them, these representatives speak 25 different languages. Many other regions and parties could join the EFA in the future. New partners in candidate countries have already shown their interest in the EFA with parties from the ten new member states who had chosen the safe haven of the big parties but who are disappointed and feel neglected, also showing an interest to join the EFA.

2. The Future Generations

In its resolution was adopted at its 5th general assembly in Rennes, EFAY stated its ambition to become a mouthpiece for minority issues, to be the voice of the voiceless.

EFAY set out a series of goals for the future. **Communication is a key issue** in its strategy. Internal communications need to be improved in order to create an instrument for all the youth parties of EFAY. This instrument is to take on the form of an information platform for exchanging and updating information about the EFA and the youth organisations that are members of EFAY. External communications need to be improved in order to penetrate the European mass media to greater effect. Publications and self-produced information materials in general can contribute to building our own political ideology, to put our product into the political market.

These communication strategies should result in increased EFAY and EFA co-operation and most of all in **becoming THE mouthpiece for the stateless nations, regions and minorities in Europe**.

The Bureau of EFAY formulated their vision on the future:

"To talk about the Future of EFA is to talk about the EFA Youth (EFAY). Many of the current EFAY members will be the future politicians of EFA and that is why they need to prepare themselves to handle this responsibility. We are the ones to guarantee in the future that the voice of minorities and stateless nations in Europe will be heard.

Many times, as young people, we are told to be "passionate", "utopian", "romantic"... We do agree. But we also know that large doses of realism are needed to achieve our goals: the respect of diversity, the rights of peoples to self-determination, the protection and the promotion of minorities in Europe. Achieving these aims is possible but requires a lot of time and hard work.

The EFAY members experience the reality of our nations/regions in a poignantly intense manner. As young people, we know how difficult it is to participate in politics and even more in sensitive issues such as minorities, identity, diversity and the right to self-determination. First of all, it is particularly difficult because the political system has, generally speaking, been designed by and for older people (many times the participation of youths is seen as an electoral handicap); but secondly, because of the rejection by young people of the politicians and political issues in general.

The EFAY believes that these problems are the result of the “elitist” history of European politics, which have been hermetically sealed off from the youth opinion, ignoring the necessities of this important group (in numbers and in the light of their future contributions to society). It is crucial that we make our voice heard. Furthermore, we not only have the right to be heard, we also have the duty to speak.

Operating since 2000, EFAY feels the need to explain and disseminate its vision on each region or nation, of Europe and of the world. We propagate our vision by meeting new people, by collaborating with many different organisations, by exploring new realities, in short, by opening new doors. These joint efforts help us build our network and spread our message all over Europe.

We feel the responsibility to work for the principles we believe in. EFAY is a small group belonging to a small party which has a huge responsibility defending the interests of minorities and stateless nations in Europe. Because of our modest size, we have to work harder and more efficiently. We want another Europe than the one that is being constructed: a Europe that respects the cultural and linguistic differences, with social justice, self-determination and sustainable development. As long as we continue to stand by those principles with a passion, we, the young people of EFA, have many things to say and a lot to do.

EFAY is not only working in order to disseminate a political and ideological message. We are also trying to encourage youths in general, as a sub-group, to actively engage in politics. We want the youth to give its opinion on the type of Europe they want, as this future is the future Europe of today’s youth.

At this moment, while the EU is going through an existential crisis, a boost of the EU youth policies by a majority of the member states, its entities and the EU institutions is at the bottom of their priority list. The youth must be considered a high priority in the EU’s reflections on its current status as an essential part of its future.

Being a small organisation will not make us work less intensively for our objectives and principles. On the contrary, EFAY will bring to bear every youthful zest, energy and hope in doing so.

EFAY considers it essential:

- to encourage the involvement of young people in politics and to increase their participation in society and in the decision making process.*

- to share and disseminate together with other young people and organisations our views on the Europe of the Peoples, on social justice and sustainable development.
- to promote strong youth policies, encouraging the involvement in society of youths in our regions and nations and in the institutions at local, regional, national, state and international level.
- to promote the exchange of ideas and experiences about mutual respect and understanding.

The EFAY members have high expectations, not only to shape the future of the European Free Alliance, but to be part of the seed of the future Europe of the Peoples where diversity and environmental respect will be a reality.”

EFAY BUREAU, February 2006.

3. A strategy towards the future

In March 2004, the EFA was founded as a European political party. In October 2004, the European Parliament recognised the EFA together with 7 other European political families⁴. This resulted in a legal personality and in community funding for the EFA through the European Parliament. This is the last phase of a process that got underway when a statute for political parties was cemented into the Treaty of Maastricht (1992 and signed in November 1993) and due political consensus on the issue was established as part of the 2003-2004⁵ EU regulations of.

The extra administrative burden that resulted from our new statute is heavy but must not distract us from our goals. It will take some years to consolidate our organisation and to create a powerful instrument in the European political field. As a party, the EFA is set to function as a communication bridge between its members and the EFA Group in the European Parliament. The political family of the EFA is a platform of pro-European parties with different backgrounds, who champion diversity and offer citizens a radically different approach from other political families.

Strategic goals of the EFA are:

Internal goals:

- to improve the internal cohesion of our members, in respect of our internal diversity, empowering the identity of the European Party;
- to promote and enhance the impact of the observer members since they often work in very difficult conditions;
- to remain a voice for the voiceless and a platform of information to empower weaker partners;
- to stimulate our member parties to put Europe higher on their political agenda;
- to continue to be a party that is progressive, tolerant, peaceful and based on solidarity and mutual respect and cultural and political identity;
- to act as a catalyst for the political ideas of its members;

- to make all our member parties responsible in accomplishing this set of goals, together with the EFA;
- to ensure that young people get the chance to build up experience and enlarge their network in the EFA;

External goals:

- to remain a transnational Pro-European party that defends the diversity of identities in Europe, specifically upholding the interests of stateless nations and minorities;
 - to offer a crucial and constructive contribution in the debate on the future of Europe, in this historic time frame for the EU, aimed at building a true European democracy with a uniform EU electoral system;
 - to improve transparency in the EU institutions;
- promote a system of two chambers in the EP
- to underline that the concept of nationalism based on the nation-state is outdated in many cases;
 - to struggle for the recognition of the stateless nations in Europe;
 - to support the struggle for freedom and autonomy of all nations in Europe;
 - to defend a Europe that is democratic, federal and has shared sovereignty;
 - to continue to monitor the situation of minorities in Europe and to empower our EFA network with new parties and new NGOs;
 - to continue to be the representative on the European political scene of all nations and regions and communities that share EFA's views that are not respected in the EU institutions;
 - to support the calls of parties from regions where there is a democratic platform for more autonomy and self-governance;
 - to fight for the respect of individual and collective human rights and the development and implementation of international humanitarian right;
 - to develop multilateral relations between the peoples and the regions on specific issues;
 - to fight for more equality in wealth, in distribution of knowledge, in ownership, in power, in creativity, in intellectual properties, in labour relations, in international trade and for more international solidarity and sustainability;
 - to fight for more gender equality;
 - to tackle the issues of a globalised-globalising world f.i. the reform of the Common agricultural Policy (CAP), a code of conduct for companies, fair trade, no GMO's,
 - to welcome peoples of Europe in the EU provided they share our common goal to effect democracy, human rights and rights of minorities and cultural diversity.

4. Conclusion

The European Union needs the European Free Alliance now more than ever in order to bring Europe closer to the people. In order to guarantee all peoples of Europe their own identity. Whereas Europe is enlarging and the world is globalising and changing, people need to be who they are and feel the EU is there to help ensure their identity.

The EFA is needed to make the EU aware of the existence of the currently non-official languages of all the peoples of Europe and most importantly of the need of respect. As a pro-European party, the EFA can only support a Union that empowers the identity of the different cultures, languages and peoples in times when globalisation is eating away at most of these precious values. If the EU wants to stay a credible peace project, it should integrate peoples enabling them to revitalise their different identities instead of homogenising everything and everyone for the sake of the economy. More of that Europe is needed and more EFA is needed in the future.

The EFA will continue to be a pro-EUROPEAN federation, an ALLIANCE of free political parties fighting for FREEdom. As has been the case since the very beginning, the larger parties with elected members on all levels and the European Free Alliance, European Political party and the EFA group in the European Parliament will drive this process forward, acting as a guiding example for the smaller parties.

The EFA Bureau, 20th of February 2006

Nelly Maes, President

Begoña Lasagabaster, Secretary-General

Jill Evans, First Vice-President

Gustave Alirol, Vice-President

Franco Piretta, Vice-President

Roelof Falkena, Vice-President

Bernat Joan i Mari, Vice-President

François Alfonsi, Treasurer

NOTES

- 1 ADVN, BE ADVN, AC652, EFA Archives, D10951(3/1): Maurits Coppieters, July 9, 1981 upon the foundation of the EFA in Strasbourg.
- 2 Adoption of recent convention of UNESCO on "Protection and promotion of the Diversity of Cultural expressions", 20th of October 2005
- 3 <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/1272&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&quiLanguage=en>
- 4 In 2005, 10 parties introduced a dossier in the European Parliament. The EP investigates the legal criteria of the 2 new European political parties.
- 5 EC 2004/2003; decision of the European Council and European Parliament of 4/11/2003

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The Poppy-'Papaver Rhoëas'.

Beautiful, seemingly fragile flower. In the northern hemisphere it generally flowers in May-June.

They bloom a lot on battlefields. First noticed in the Napoleonic era and after the Great War (1914-1918). After John McCrae's poem "In Flanders Fields" was published in 1915 the poppy became a popular symbol for soldiers who died in battle. Since 1920 it is officially used for Remembrance Day, on the 11th of November.

1920 is the year of birth of Maurits Coppieters (Volksunie): The first MEP of EFA, the Honorary President of EFA and the First Honorary member of EFA. He wrote four political essays under the title "the year of the poppy".

After two wars in less than 25 years the European continent had been torn apart and people, tired of this, said WAR, NEVER AGAIN.

Pacifism has always been a key issue for EFA.