

Speech for the former Presidents

Dear former Presidents and Treasurer (my fellow Vice-President Rudy), dear former director (Mechthild von Alemann)

I am delighted that you have accepted my invitation to join us this afternoon and to hear about the new (not quite actually) challenges that the sector is facing at EU level.

I and all colleagues are also eager to hear from you what were your experiences within FEP and what are your views on the current situation and activities.

Before we give you the floor, I would like to pay respect to three colleagues, two former Presidents who have left us last year, Fernando Guedes and Volker Schwarz, and the first Director of FEP, Paul Cerf.

I remember last President of GELC, Fernando Guedes who, together with Alain Gründ and Pere Vicens, initiated what would become the Federation of European Publishers. A man of vision and a great publisher. I am happy that his son will be joining us this afternoon.

We miss also Volker Schwarz, the third President of FEP. A legal publisher from Baden-Baden, he was very instrumental to increasing the visibility of FEP.

Paul Cerf, a former spokesman of the European Commission, built and ably served FEP for four years. He passed away almost 20 years ago.

To my great regret, four other former Presidents could not join us: Alain Gründ, the first President of FEP who has shared these few words with me. He is hoping that FEP will remain successful in its actions on behalf of publishers and remembers being with Fernando Guedes, one of the founders of FEP, recalling the first campaigns and the work accomplished by former Directors, Paul Cerf and Mechthild von Alemann, and how the FEP office has always brilliantly served our organization.

I also regret that Anton Hilscher who was President between 2002 and 2004 and his successor, Arne Bach, President between 2004 and 2006, could not join us. Both deplored not being able to come, having prior commitments preventing them to celebrate this anniversary with us.

Finally, at a very last minute (he called me this morning), Pierre Dutilleul couldn't come. Unexpectedly, last evening he got a phone call from the cabinet of the Prime Minister asking him to attend a meeting this evening.

For those who attended the first part of the meeting, you will have seen that topics don't really change. Of course when the Groupement des Editeurs de Livres de la Communauté (GELC) was created, no one was yet dreaming of e-books and of the digital single market. Europe as an entity was still in its infancy. But very fast, the very topics we are still discussing today came into the open: copyright with a first reaction from GELC to an EU report already in 1977, VAT a few years later and of course, fixed book prices.

Topics have not really changed, what has really changed is the increasingly polarized views with the chain itself. Certainly with the libraries. Reading about the issues that were addressed by our federation in the 50 past years, I could see that the relationships with them were always complex and although both parties recognize the vital importance of each other, the constant (and strengthened) fight for more exceptions makes me wonder whether the librarians really understand the book chain and how fragile is the ecosystem.

In the coming weeks and months, in the European Parliament and the Council, FEP and the publishers associations in membership of FEP will have again and again to remind the politicians that unfair competition via free - yet legal - access will affect the entire chain and the capacity to invest in new works.

Some amendments from MEPs we have seen in the last days are simply ignoring the reality of the book world. And the fact that the librarians are not willing to accept that digital is different in terms of consumption of works, is hindering the dialogue we could, we

should, we want to have with them. We will need everyone on deck to explain these differences and how our sector works if we don't want to have overly broad exceptions to copyright for libraries and for education.

Within the chain, we also need to maintain the dialogue with the authors. I deeply regret that neither the president nor the director were able to accept our invitation for this evening. They too often feel in a weak position and consider that we have far too much power. Today, these issues are being also on the table of the politicians in the so-called copyright in the digital single market Directive. While we all agree that we need at individual publishing houses level and possibly at national level to have fair rules for contracts and reporting of sales to our authors, the politicians must also understand that there are different circumstances that need to be considered. FEP has always been committed to dialogue with authors and will remain so.

Speaking of the chain, I cannot forget the booksellers.

I, myself, a former bookseller – indeed for a short period of time but definitely enough to learn about the activity and to experience the difficulties of being a bookseller these days of quite unfair competition between the so called independent shops and the big chains

FEP has always had a positive relationship with its sister organization whether when it was called the Groupement des Associations de Libraires de la Communauté (GALC) and since a few years, the European and International Booksellers Federation. I am certainly favorable to the pursuit of such a constructive collaboration and I have been working intensely to achieve that goal. Actually, following an initiative by my predecessor, Pierre Dutilleul, we meet EIBF co-presidents twice a year

Back to FEP, all of you have had an essential role in increasing the visibility, the presence and the credibility of our joint undertaking. I am very happy that you have accepted my invitation and joined us, we all feel very honored to have you with us.

From the first days of the GELC where meetings were called by the assistant of the President in function to the professional secretariat first run by ADEB and Bernard Gerard who

could not be with us today and then by Paul Cerf and Mechthild von Alemann and today by Anne Bergman-Tahon, seconded by excellent colleagues, the Deputy Director Enrico Turrin, the legal advisor Małgorzata Szczodrowska and the assistant Roberta Balduzzi,

time has passed but the very heart of the preoccupations of our Federation remains the same: make sure that the European policies are supporting the book sector, the first cultural sector in Europe and in the world and a sector, where us Europeans can pride ourselves of being in a leading position – the single cultural sector where Europe is World leader

Can I now open the floor to ask each of you to address the meetings (it is one of our well-known *tour de table* to listen to the many stories the former presidents have to tell: some very serious and decisive moments or just some curious anecdotes):

First Pere Vicens i Rahola, the second President of the FEP (and 13th President from the European representation of publishers, from 1992 to 1994

John Clement, fourth President from 1996 to 1998

Ulrico Carlo Hoepli, fifth President 1998-2000

Michael Gill, sixth President from 2000 to 2002

Jonas Modig, ninth President from 2006 to 2008

Federico Mota, tenth President from 2008 to 2010

Fergal Tobin, eleventh President from 2010 till 2012

Piotr Marciszuk, 12th President from 2012 till 2014

Mechthild von Alemann, Director from 1994 till 2004

Closing words

Thank you very much for having shared with us what FEP means to you, I trust we should all be proud of our Federation, what it has achieved in the last 50 years and what it will

achieves in the next decades. Everyone around this table has contributed to the joint efforts and needs to be sincerely thanked for the dedication. Give the bottles.

Just before closing the session, I want to give each one of the past Presidents a token of our gratitude: a bottle of Port Wine with their names.

We will now close the meeting and I look forward seeing you all together with our guests tonight at 7 pm at The Hotel for the gala dinner.