Building European Belonging:

Inside the Archives of the European Cultural Foundation

HISTORICAL ARCHIVES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

European Cultural Foundation

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Table of contents

Foreword 4

I. Origin and Vision
1.1 The Pre-Founding Moments: The Hague and Saint-Germain-en-Lay 8
1.2 From Conference to Centre: The Geneva Years 9
1.3 The Act of Foundation: Statutes, Governance, and First Leadership 10
1.4 Presidential Succession and Institutional Continuity 11
1.5 Relocation to Amsterdam and Consolidation of Institutional Architecture 12

II. Looking into the Future — Plan Europe 2000
2.1 The Royaumont Meeting and the Decision to Think Long-Term 16
2.2 The Four Research Projects 17
2.3 Scale, Method, and Publications 18
2.4 Legacy: From Foresight to Institutional Architecture 19

III. Building Networks: Congresses, Committees, and Institutes
3.1 The Congress Series: Agenda-Setting for a Continent 22
3.2 The National Committees: Political Intelligence and Local Embeddedness 23
3.3 Research Institutes I: Education, Environment, Intercontinental Cooperation 24
3.4 Research Institutes II: Political Studies, Work and Society, and Associated Centres 25
3.5 Secretary-Generals and Directors: Operational Leadership 26

IV. Europe in Motion — Education and Mobility
4.1 Precursors to ERASMUS: Joint Study Programmes and Short Study Visits 30
4.2 Eurydice: The Information Architecture of European Education Policy 31
4.3 The ERASMUS Bureau: Europe's Flagship Mobility Programme 32
4.4 TEMPUS and Educational Cooperation in Post-1989 Eastern Europe 33
4.5 Beyond ERASMUS: Artistic Mobility, Cultural Exchange, and the Tandem Programme 34

V. Beyond the Wall — East-West Relations and the Democratic Transition
5.1 Recognising the Divided Continent: ECF and the Cold War Cultural Agenda 38
5.2 Supporting Democratic Transition: The East West Parliamentary Practice Project 39
5.3 Cultural Policy Support for Post-Communist Societies 40

VI. The EU Neighborhood: Opening Dialogue, Enlarging the Minds
6.1 The Mediterranean Dimension: Literature, Language, and Cultural Dialogue 44
6.2 The Balkans: Conflict, Transition, and Cultural Capacity-Building 45

VII. Media and the European Public Sphere
7.1 The Television Working Group and the Idea of a European Media Space 48
7.2 The Task Force on Television and Prix Europa 49
7.3 LabforCulture and the Digital Turn 50
7.4 Display Europe and the Council for European Public Space 51

VIII. Advocating for Culture — Philanthropy for Europe
8.1 Early Advocacy: Council of Europe Partnership, Tax Reform Studies, and Founding Infrastructure 54
8.2 The Tindemans Report, the Brussels European Cooperation Fund, and Advocacy for a European Foundation 55
8.3 Establishing the European Foundation Centre 56
8.4 European Campaigns: From 70 Cents for Culture to the Cultural Deal for Europe 57
8.5 Publishing, Documentation, and Institutional Memory 58

Conclusion — A Pioneer in Every Era 59

The European Cultural Foundation was established in 1954 on the belief that Europe would not be built by treaties alone. It required something deeper: a shared sense that our destinies are connected. For over seventy years, the Foundation has championed the vital role of culture and education in fostering belonging and solidarity across Europe. Its work has given rise to countless programmes, institutes, campaigns, and collaborations across the continent, including its contribution to shaping and implementing the ERASMUS student mobility scheme.

Today, this legacy is brought together at the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence, alongside the records of the European Union's key bodies. This is an acknowledgment of our pivotal role as an independent foundation in the European integration process.

More than a historical record, the ECF archive is a living resource. It preserves the organisation's memory while offering insights into decades of cultural collaboration, challenges, and progress. The ECF archive will provide new generations with opportunities to engage with this legacy in ways that go beyond facts and figures.

— André Wilkens,
Director, European Cultural Foundation

Archives offer us a window to the past. The Historical Archives of the European Union offers such a window for reflecting on the history of transnational policies and decision-making processes in Europe. Yet the European story cannot be fully understood through political and economic projects alone. The archives of the European Cultural Foundation provide a unique stage to engage with the multi-faceted history of cultural cooperation in Europe.

Even 80 years after the end of the Second World War and almost 40 years after the collapse of the Soviet regime in 1989, the political union founded on the values of peace, the rule of law, democracy and respect for fundamental rights remains fragile and incomplete. Culture is one of the strongest connectors for Europeans, and the archives of the European Cultural Foundation form a strong link to this shared cultural memory.

This catalogue celebrates 70 years cultural cooperation in Europe through the deposit of the archives of the European Cultural Foundation at the European University Institute in Florence. It offers present and future generations an opportunity to look back in time so that they may better orient themselves towards the way forward

— Dieter Schlenker,
Director, Historical Archives of European Union

View of Pavillon Henri IV, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 2011.
Photo: Lionel Allorge / Source: Courtesy of the artist

1.1 The Pre-Founding Moments:
The Hague and Saint-Germain-en-Lay

1.2 From Conference to Centre:The Geneva Years

1.3 The Act of Foundation:
Statutes, Governance, and First Leadership

1.4 Presidential Succession and Institutional Continuity

1.5 Relocation to Amsterdam and
Consolidation of Institutional Architecture

I.
Origin and Vision

Portrait of Winston Churchill at Congress of Europe, The Hague, 1948.
Photo: Unknown author/Source: ECF

Preparatory meeting for the establishment of the European Cultural Foundation at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 1953.
Photo: Unknown author/ HAEU, ECF-558

The Pre-Founding Moments: The Hague and Saint-Germain-en-Lay

1.1

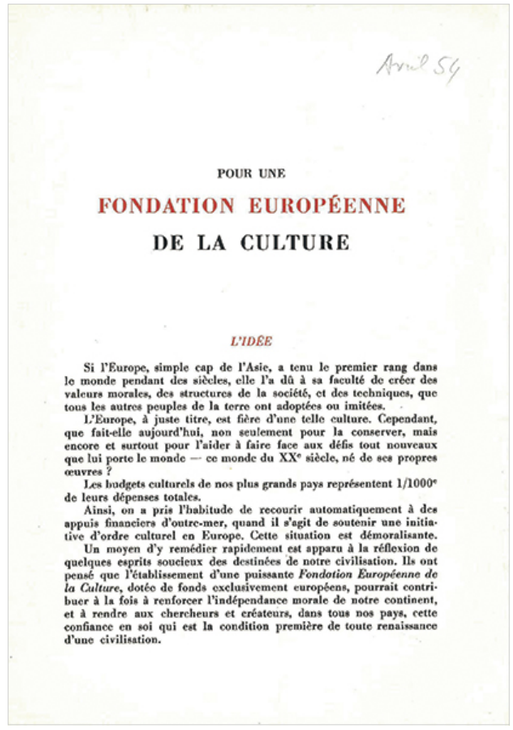
The institutional origins of the European Cultural Foundation can be traced to two distinct but related events. The first was the Congress of Europe, convened at The Hague in May 1948, at which Denis de Rougemont served as rapporteur for the Cultural Commission. Held under the honorary presidency of Winston Churchill and attended by several hundred political and intellectual figures from across Europe, the Congress marked a decisive moment, generating commitments both to establish a Council of Europe and to create a European cultural institution.

De Rougemont's commission articulated the conviction that would become foundational to ECF: that political and economic union, however necessary, was insufficient without a parallel effort to cultivate a shared European cultural awareness and sense of belonging.

The second, distinct event was a meeting held at the Pavillon Henri IV in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, near Paris, on 14 and 15 November 1953. There, a smaller and more intimate group of founding figures gathered to formulate the specific institutional concept that would become ECF. Those present included Robert Schuman, Denis de Rougemont, Georges Villiers, and Joseph Retinger. At the heart of their discussions was de Rougemont's *Habeas Animam*, a manifesto arguing that Europe could only truly rebuild and flourish through a shared sense of European belonging.

While the Hague Congress established the broad European cultural vision in the public arena, the meeting at Saint-Germain-en-Laye translated that vision, in a private setting, into a concrete institutional proposal.

The two occasions, public and intimate, collective and foundational — together constitute the pre-history of the Foundation's formal establishment in 1954.



Avril 54

POUR UNE

FONDATION EUROPÉENNE

DE LA CULTURE

L'IDÉE

Si l'Europe, simple cap de l'Asie, a tenu le premier rang dans le monde pendant des siècles, elle l'a dû à sa faculté de créer des valeurs morales, des structures de la société, et des techniques, que tous les autres peuples de la terre ont adoptées ou imitées.

L'Europe, à juste titre, est fière d'une telle culture. Cependant, que fait-elle aujourd'hui, non seulement pour la conserver, mais encore et surtout pour l'aider à faire face aux défis tout nouveaux que lui porte le monde — ce monde du XX^e^ siècle, né de ses propres œuvres ?

Les budgets culturels de nos plus grands pays représentent 1/1000^e^ de leurs dépenses totales.

Ainsi, on a pris l'habitude de recourir automatiquement à des appuis financiers d'outre-mer, quand il s'agit de soutenir une initiative d'ordre culturel en Europe. Cette situation est démoralisante.

Un moyen d'y remédier rapidement est apparu à la réflexion de quelques esprits soucieux des destinées de notre civilisation. Ils ont pensé que l'établissement d'une puissante *Fondation Européenne de la Culture*, dotée de fonds exclusivement européens, pourrait contribuer à la fois à renforcer l'indépendance morale de notre continent, et à rendre aux chercheurs et créateurs, dans tous nos pays, cette confiance en soi qui est la condition première de toute renaissance d'une civilisation.

Pour une Fondation Européenne de la Culture, Geneva, 1954/ Source: ECF

From Conference to Centre: The Geneva Years

1.2

In the months following the Hague Congress, the first concrete institutional steps towards a permanent European cultural institution began to take shape. In December 1949, the first European Cultural Conference was convened in Lausanne, providing a forum in which the idea of a standing cultural body was further developed and legitimised.

By 1950, the Centre Européen de la Culture had opened its doors in Geneva under the direction of Denis de Rougemont. It operated as an independent civil-society organisation capable of convening intellectuals, artists, and educators across national frontiers without the constraints of formal diplomatic protocol.

The formal creation of the Club Européen de la Culture in November 1953 marked a further step in consolidating this community around a shared cultural and civic project, forming an intermediate step between the informal post-war networks and the institutionalised Foundation that would follow.

Among the central figures active in this milieu was Henri Brugmans, president of the Union of European Federalists and, from 1950, Rector of the Collège d'Europe in Bruges, who would become a key member of ECF's governance from its earliest years.

Governors Council of the ECF: André Voisin, Louis Camu, Bonabe de Rougé, Georges Villiers, Raymond Silva, Denis de Rougemont, J. Teissier, Geneva, 1955. Photo: Unknown author/HAEU, ECF-500

The Act of Foundation: Statutes, Governance, and First Leadership

1.3

The European Cultural Foundation was formally constituted through two successive steps. On 5 and 6 October 1954, the Foundation convened at the Pavillon Henri IV in Saint-Germain-en-Laye: a final revision of the statutes was undertaken and the first Board of Governors was nominated, though the statutes were not yet definitively adopted, pending review by Professor Jean-T. Lacour of the University of Geneva.

The first governors nominated at this meeting were H. Brugmans, J. Retinger, D. de Rougemont, P. Rijkens, R. Schuman, R. Silva, G. Villiers, and P. van Zeeland. On 16 December 1954, at the headquarters of the ECF in Geneva, the Foundation's statutes were officially signed and the first Council of Governors was held. Seven governors were present and signed the constituent act: H. Brugmans, F. Marinotti, J. Retinger, D. de Rougemont, R. Schuman, R. Silva, and G. Villiers. L. Camu, H. Reusch (represented by H.G. Stein), P. Rijkens and P. van Zeeland were excused.

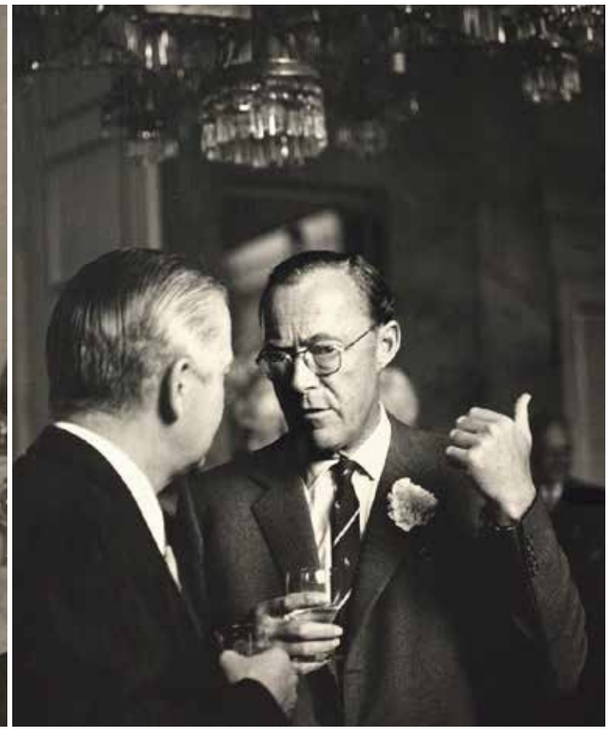
This sequence of governance nominations preceding legal constitution was consistent with standard practice for foundations of this kind and reflects the continuity of the founding group from the Club Européen.

Robert Schuman, former French Prime Minister, initiator of the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950 and a driving political force behind the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community, was appointed inaugural President, conferring immediate political authority and symbolic resonance on the new organisation.

Denis de Rougemont assumed the directorship of the Foundation in his capacity as Director of the European Cultural Centre (CEC) in Geneva, whose headquarters hosted the signing. Raymond Silva, General Secretary of the CEC, was among the signatories and served as the Foundation's first concurrent Secretary-General, confirmed by de Rougemont's 1957 resignation letter.

The Foundation's mission was articulated from the outset around three organising principles: fostering a living awareness of Europe as a shared civilisation; embracing a holistic conception of culture encompassing education, science, and the arts; and engaging contemporary global challenges from a distinctively European perspective.

Portrait of Robert Schuman. Photo: Unknown author/HAEU, ECF-538



Portrait of HRH Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands at the Board of Governors meeting, Soestdijk Palace, Baarn, 1969. Photo: maria austria/HAEU, ECF-528_2

Presidential Succession and Institutional Continuity

1.4

Robert Schuman's transition from the ECF presidency was a gradual process. At the 6th Board of Governors meeting (24–25 November 1956, Geneva), his request regarding the presidency was discussed but deliberately deferred. At the 7th Board of Governors (11 January 1957, Paris), Schuman was still present as a Governor, while HRH Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands chaired the meeting, confirming that the formal presidential transition had not yet occurred. At the 8th Council of Governors (16 March 1957), de Rougemont's resignation letter was addressed to «Mr. President», suggesting that Schuman may still have been formal President at that date.

By November 1957, the transition was complete: HRH Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands served as ECF's second President, guiding the Foundation through more than two decades of growth — a series of congresses, the relocation to Amsterdam, the launch of Plan Europe 2000, and the creation of the research institutes network. In 1976, he took the decision to step down as President of the Foundation.

Mr Ynso Scholten had been serving as acting Chairman since September of the same year, and the Board of Governors formally appointed him President at its meeting of 7 May 1977. The Board simultaneously proposed that the title of Honorary Member of the Foundation be bestowed on HRH Prince Bernhard, a proposal unanimously accepted. Ynso Scholten's sudden death in 1983 necessitated a brief institutional transition.

HRH Princess Margriet of the Netherlands was formally appointed ECF President in 1984, inaugurating more than two decades of sustained royal engagement.

In 2007, HRH Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands succeeded HRH Princess Margriet in the role, continuing the Foundation's connection with the Dutch Royal House. The year 2024 brought a deliberate redefinition of the position as an honorary presidency, reflecting ECF's maturation as a fully professional and independent institution.

Portrait of Ynso Scholten.
Photo: max koot den haag / HAEU, ECF-540

Portrait of HRH Princess Margriet of the Netherlands.
Photo: Unknown author / HAEU, ECF-522

Relocation to Amsterdam and Consolidation of Institutional Architecture

1.5

From the late 1950s onwards, HRH Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands oversaw the Foundation's relocation to the Dutch capital and helped secure long-term funding through national lottery revenues beginning in 1960. To achieve this, however, the European Cultural Foundation had to be based in Amsterdam. On 30 July 1960, the Foundation was formally reconstituted under Dutch law as ECF Amsterdam; on 19 December 1960, the original Geneva entity was dissolved.

Portrait of HRH Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands speaking at the Princess Margriet Award for Culture ceremony, Schaerbeek, 2008.
Photo: Unknown author / HAEU, ECF-557_2

The year 1960 produced two agreements of structural importance. The first concerned a financial arrangement with Stichting Centraal Overleg Fondsenwervingsacties (C.O.F.), the national fund-raising coordination body created as the Dutch Sporttotalisator (the national football pool) came under legal regulation. ECF was a founding member of C.O.F. in 1960, gaining access to a share of lottery proceeds alongside the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds and the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation. The arrangement was facilitated by Paul Rijkens, former President of Unilever and ECF's first Treasurer, who served as the first Chairman of C.O.F. From around 1969–1970, ECF also participated in the Stichting Algemene Loterij Nederland (G.N.L.), the General National Lottery founded in 1970, through a joint agreement with the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds and the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation. ECF's reconstitution under Dutch law was accompanied by two formal agreements with the Council of Europe, signed respectively on 2 July 1960 and 10 November 1965 at Soestdijk Palace, which established and subsequently extended the terms of institutional cooperation between the two bodies. Annual reports with full financial statements had been produced since 1958, and independent auditing was formally established from 1961 onwards.

2.1 The Royaumont Meeting and the Decision to Think Long-Term
2.2 The Four Research Projects
2.3 Scale, Method, and Publications
2.4 Legacy: From Foresight to Institutional Architecture

II.
Looking into the Future — Plan Europe 2000

Cover of *L'Europe face au 21ème Siècle*, 1962./Source: ECF

2.1

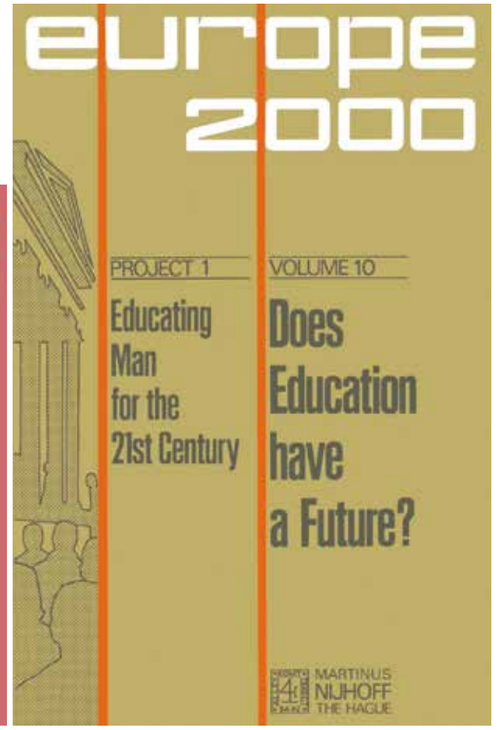
The Royaumont Meeting and the Decision to Think Long-Term

The intellectual origins of *Plan Europe 2000* can be traced back to 1958, when the Foundation entrusted the Dutch sociologist and pioneer of Futures Studies, Fred Polak, with a particularly demanding assignment: to formulate a prospective framework outlining Europe's future trajectory and to define the role that the Foundation might assume within it.

The gathering held at the Abbaye de Royaumont in 1962 was convened under ECF's auspices to examine the long-term challenges facing European societies. The overall programme of cultural activities for the coming years was drawn up and entitled *L'Europe face au 21ème Siècle*. The main points of this initiative were published in a brochure produced in five languages.

The programme was formally launched in 1968 under Secretary-General George Sluizer and was conceived not as a technical forecasting exercise, but as a normative agenda-setting effort: to identify the values, structural conditions, and policy priorities required for a shared and desirable European future.

Cover of *Fears and Hopes for European Urbanization*, vol.1, Project 3: *Urbanization: Planning Human Environment in Europe*, 1973./Source: ECF



Cover of *Does Education have a Future*, vol.10, Project 1: *Educating Man for the 21st Century*, 1975./Source: ECF

2.2

The Four Research Projects

Plan Europe 2000 was organised around four major thematic sub-projects:

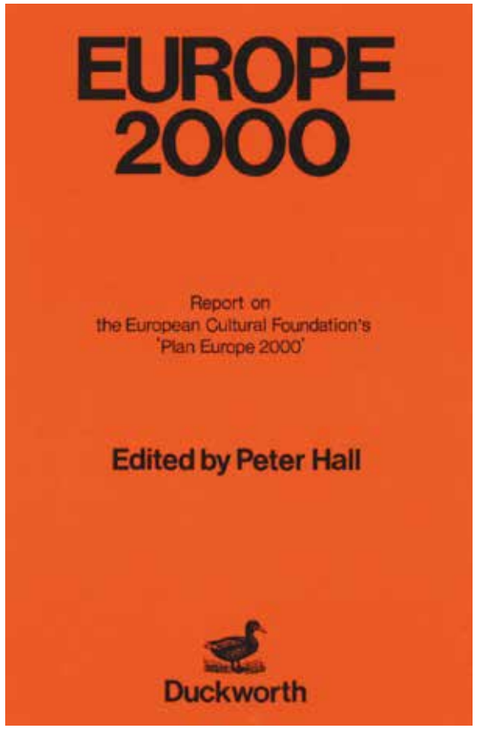
—Project 1: *Educating Man for the 21st Century*, which examined the pedagogical transformations required for an era of accelerating change (Director, Raymond Georis);

—Project 2: *Man and Industry of Tomorrow*, addressing the future of work and industrial organisation (Director, Gerhard Stöber);

—Project 3: *Urbanization: Planning Human Environment in Europe*, examining the social and cultural dimensions of rapid urban growth (Director, Michel van Hulten);

—Project 4: *Rural society in the year 2000*, anticipating by several years the environmental governance agenda that would dominate European policy from the 1980s onwards (Director, Anton J. Jansen).

Each sub-project was conceived as both a research exercise and a contribution to public policy debate.



Cover of *Europe 2000* by Peter Hall, 1977. / Source: ECF

Scale, Method, and Publications

2.3

More than two hundred researchers from fifteen European countries were mobilised across the four sub-projects, coordinated by a Programme Committee that reflected in its composition the transnational and interdisciplinary ethos of the programme. ECF's national committees proved indispensable for identifying and connecting relevant expertise within their respective countries.

In 1977, Peter Hall encapsulated all these efforts in his wide-ranging study of European issues, set out in his book Europe 2000. The methodological approach was explicitly interdisciplinary: economists, sociologists, education specialists, urban planners, and environmental scientists worked in parallel within a coordinated framework. The programme produced forty-seven publications in eight European languages — a dissemination effort of a scale and linguistic breadth unprecedented for a single private foundation programme of the period.

Legacy: From Foresight to Institutional Architecture

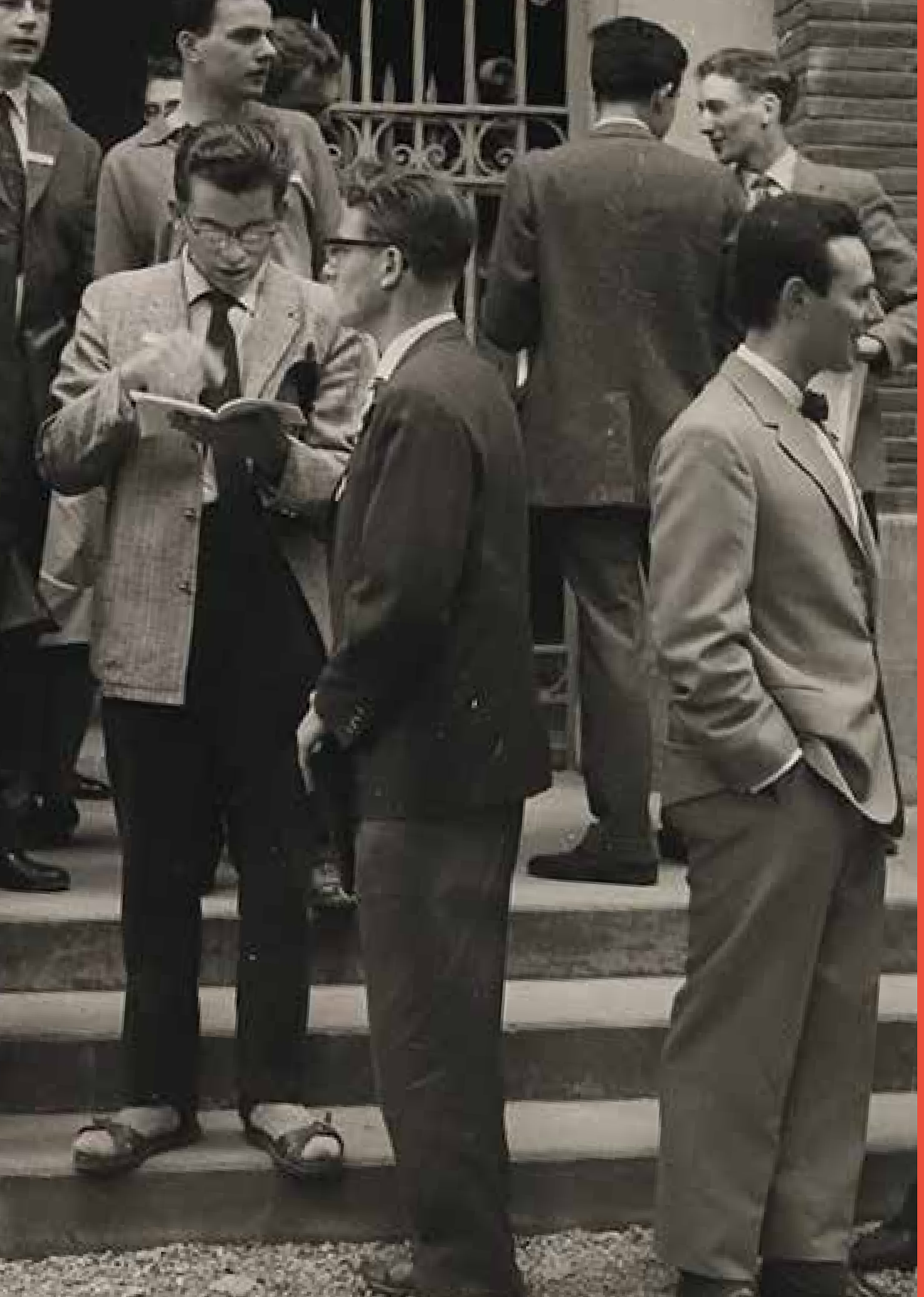
2.4

The most structurally significant legacy of *Plan Europe 2000* was institutional. Over its seven years of operation, the programme generated a transnational community of researchers, a body of comparative European knowledge, and a set of thematic priorities in education, environmental policy, work, and political culture.

These priorities provided the intellectual and institutional framework within which ECF's network of specialised research institutes took shape.

The first institute (Paris, 1974) was founded while *Plan Europe 2000* was still in its final phase; the remaining four (Bonn 1976, Madrid 1977, London 1978, Maastricht 1979) followed its conclusion. This sequence reflects a process of progressive institutionalisation of the programme's intellectual agenda rather than a single post-programme decision.

Beyond this institutional dimension, *Plan Europe 2000* established ECF's credibility as a producer of policy-relevant knowledge at the European level and demonstrated that a private cultural foundation could function as a strategic intellectual resource for the continent. In this sense, ECF played a pioneering role in futures studies and scenario-based policy research, undertaken before such methods had been formalised in dedicated academic or governmental institutions. This remains one of the most distinctive contributions in the Foundation's history.



Young men and women from across Europe gathered to discuss the future direction of European society, Toulouse, 1961.
Photo: PROVOST/HAEU, ECF-504_4

3.1 The Congress Series: Agenda-Setting for a Continent

3.2 The National Committees:
Political Intelligence and Local Embeddedness

3.3 Research Institutes I:
Education, Environment, Intercontinental Cooperation

3.4 Research Institutes II:
Political Studies, Work and Society, and Associated Centres

3.5 Secretary-Generals and Directors: Operational Leadership

III.
Building Networks: Congresses, Committees, and Institutes

Meeting: *Training of Engineers and Europe*, Grenoble, 1963.
Photo: PHOTOPRESS Grenoble/*(this page, left)* HAEU, ECF-506_1,
(this page, right) ECF-506_2

3.1

The Congress Series: Agenda-Setting for a Continent

Between 1957 and 1970, ECF organised seven numbered international congresses, each addressing a specific intellectual and policy challenge, alongside three associated thematic meetings — eleven events in total. The eight congresses were:

—Amsterdam — *The Cultural and Intellectual Unity in Europe* (November 1957, 1st)

—Milan — *Youth Training in Europe* (December 1958, 2nd)

—Vienna — *Responsibilities of Europe towards Developing Countries* (November 1959, 3rd)

—Copenhagen — *Western Civilization in the XXth Century in its Cultural and Economic Aspects* (1960, 4th)

—Brussels — *Education of Tomorrow's Europeans* (April 1962, 5th)

—Grenoble — *Training of Engineers and Europe* (1963, 6th)

—Athens — *Living Heritage of Ancient Greece* (1964, 7th)

The first four congresses convened under the active intellectual involvement of Denis de Rougemont in his capacity as Governor (having resigned as Director in March 1957).

From May 1959, under the Secretary-Generalship of Commander G.G.R. Rodd, the congress series established the model of high-level transnational intellectual dialogue that would come to define it. George Sluizer, appointed Secretary-General in 1961, continued this tradition from the 5th congress onwards. Associated thematic meetings took place in Toulouse (1961), San Martino (1965), and Gerona (1966).

Full proceedings were published in multiple languages, reinforcing the ECF's intellectual authority in European cultural and educational debate.

Meeting: *Training of Engineers and Europe*, Grenoble, 1963.
Photo: PHOTOPRESS Grenoble/HAEU, ECF-506_3

Congress: *Youth Training in Europe*, Milan, 1958.
Photo: Fototerzi/HAEU, ECF-502_5

3.2

The National Committees: Political Intelligence and Local Embeddedness

From December 1960 onwards, the European Cultural Foundation and Council of Europe began establishing national committees across European countries.

The French committee was the first; British, Greek, Danish, Belgian, Dutch, and Luxembourg committees followed in 1961; Sweden in 1964; Finland in 1969; Norway and Germany in 1971, together with the re-establishment of the Danish committee; Switzerland in 1972; Portugal and Italy in 1980; Austria in 1981; Ireland in 1984; and Cyprus in November 1986. The global stimulus of 1989–1990 prompted the rapid establishment of committees in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland in 1990.

By 1995, twenty-two national committees operated across the continent. These committees were far more than administrative outposts. They provided ECF with a nuanced understanding of national policy environments, advised on grant applications, organised local events, and contributed to fundraising. Their collective intelligence proved particularly valuable in supporting *Plan Europe 2000*.

As ECF's programme model evolved towards direct thematic operation, the decision was taken to dissolve the committees in 2004, closing a model of distributed institutional presence without parallel in European civil society.

Congress: *Youth Training in Europe*, Milan, 1958.
Photo: Fototerzi / HAEU, ECF-502_9

Congress: *Responsibilities of Europe towards Developing Countries*, Vienna, 1959. Photo: Photo-Studio K. Winkler / HAEU, ECF-503_3

Research Institutes I: Education, Environment, Intercontinental Cooperation

3.3

The most structurally ambitious expression of the Foundation's institution-building efforts came in the mid-1970s with the creation of the first three of what would become a larger network of specialised research institutes. The European Institute of Education, officially named Institut d'Éducation de la Fondation Européenne in its founding governance document, was formally constituted on 29 November 1974 by deliberation of the ECF Executive Committee and began operations on 1 January 1975. It was initially based at 60 rue de la Concorde, Brussels, under the directorship of Ladislav Cerych, with Asa Briggs of the University of Sussex serving as Chairman of the Institute's Council.

In November 1975 the Institute transferred its seat to the Université Paris IX–Dauphine, following an offer by the French Government. The Institute was subsequently renamed the European Institute on Education and Social Policy (c.1982) and became fully independent from ECF on 1 January 1993.

The Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) was established in Bonn in January 1976 in cooperation with the German Fonds für Umweltstudien. It subsequently opened a Paris office in April 1978 and a London office in May 1980, under the direction of Nigel Haigh, developing into one of Europe's most authoritative bodies on environmental legislation and policy.

The Institute for Intercontinental Cooperation was founded in Madrid in 1977 in partnership with Banco Urquijo and the Collège d'Europe. Each institute embodied ECF's conviction that sustained independent research capacity — not grant-making alone — was the prerequisite for durable influence on European policy.

Congress: *Education of Tomorrow's Europeans*, Brussels, 1962.
Photo: "NOIR & BLANC" / HAEU, ECF-505_2

Research Institutes II: Political Studies, Work and Society, and Associated Centres

3.4

The core institute-building programme reached its planned completion with four further centres from 1978 to 1983. The European Centre for Political Studies was founded in London in 1978 in collaboration with the Policy Studies Institute, addressing the institutional and normative dimensions of European governance and democratic practice.

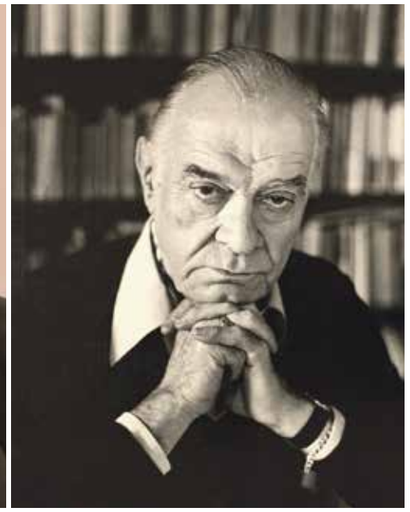
The European Centre for Work and Society was established in Maastricht in 1979, dedicated to research on labour relations, industrial democracy, and the changing conditions of work in an integrating economy.

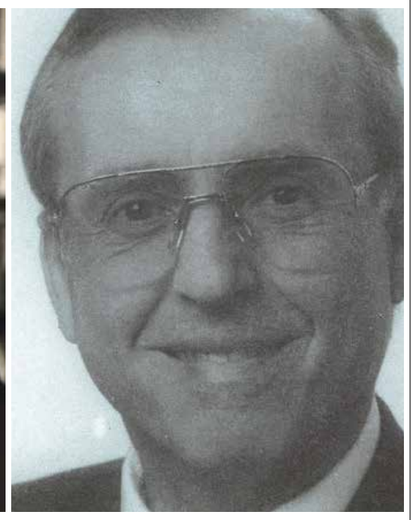
The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) was founded in Brussels in 1983 with Peter Ludlow appointed Director. The Centre was created through ECF's Brussels Fund, the European Cooperation Fund, founded in 1977 under the presidency of Leo Tindemans, which served as the legal structure for CEPS. The General Assembly of the Brussels Fund confirmed the establishment of CEPS on 5 and 12 March 1981, with Jean-Pascal van Ypersele as Chairman of the Centre and Alko van der Wiel as Treasurer of the Brussels Fund.

The European Institute for the Media was formally established, under the chairmanship of George Wedell, within the University of Manchester on 1 January 1983 as a collaborative initiative between the University and the European Cultural Foundation, with the support of the Greater Manchester County Council.

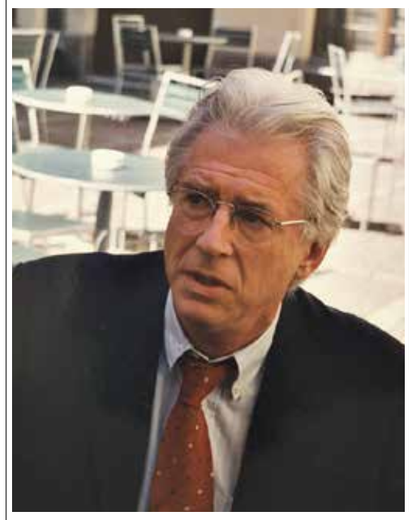
The Institute provided a forum for the discussion of objectives and policies by representatives of public and professional interests in the media sector across European countries, addressing the evolution, roles, and influence of the media and monitoring its pluralism and freedom.

The European Centre for Environmental Communication (ECEC) was set up in December 1985, with initial support from the ECF. The Centre's objectives were to promote communication on the environment in Europe, particularly in the audiovisual media sector, and to stimulate cooperation and exchanges in this field by developing a programme of specific events and activities. The Founder-Director of the European Centre for Environmental Communication was Alain Sagne, who assumed his position officially on 1 January 1986. He was previously head of the Paris office of the Institute for European Environmental Policy, Bonn. Taken together, the institutes constituted a transnational research infrastructure: independently governed, geographically distributed, and thematically complementary. Although they progressively gained full independence in the early 1990s, they remained formally associated with the ECF network until 2004.





(this page, left) Portrait of Raymond Georis. Photo: Unknown author / HAEU, ECF-531.1.
(this page, centre) Portrait of Denis de Rougemont, 1985. Photo: Erling Mandelmann / HAEU, ECF-539



(this page, centre) Portrait of Katherine Watson, 2012. Photo: Unknown author
(this page, right) Portrait of André Wilkens, 2019. Photo: Gerlind Klemens
Source both photos: ECF

Portrait of Rüdiger Stephan. Photo: Unknown author / Source: ECF

Portrait of Gottfried Wagner, 2002. Photo: Unknown author / HAEU, ECF-534

3.5

Secretary-Generals and Directors: Operational Leadership

The operational leadership of the ECF across seven decades has been provided by a succession of Secretaries-General and Directors whose tenures have shaped the Foundation's programmatic identity at each stage of its development.

Denis de Rougemont served as the Foundation's first Director, formally from 1955 to 1957, providing intellectual and programmatic leadership. His resignation letter states that he had assumed direction informally *'upon the creation of the Foundation'* in December 1954; the formal appointment is confirmed by the communiqué of the Foundation's first Board meeting (11 May 1955, Geneva), which lists him as *'Directeur'* alongside Raymond Silva as *'Secrétaire Général'* and Charles van Houten as *'Délégué Général'*.

The ECF statutes were published in the Swiss Official Gazette on 5 March 1955, marking the formal establishment of the administrative structure. Both de Rougemont and Silva therefore operated in a dual capacity from December 1954, with formal appointments recognised from March/May 1955. Both resigned simultaneously on 16 March 1957 at the 8th Council of Governors: de Rougemont as Director and Silva as Secretary-General, the latter stating that de Rougemont's decision *«Les motifs qui l'ont incite à prendre cette decision m'obligent à agir de même»*. The Foundation therefore had no dedicated Director or Secretary-General between March 1957 and May 1959.

Commander G.G.R. Rodd was confirmed as the Foundation's first dedicated Secretary-General by 21 May 1959, ending an interregnum of approximately two years since Silva's resignation. Rodd served until 1962, overseeing the relocation to Amsterdam. At that same meeting, de Rougemont appeared as a member of the Board of Governors, confirming his transition from a directorial to a governance role.

George Sluizer held the Secretary-Generalship from 1961 to 1972, a period encompassing the later congresses and the initiation of *Plan Europe 2000*, with an overlap with Rodd in 1961–1962. By 12 March 1973, Sluizer had assumed the role of Advisor.

Raymond Georis served as Secretary-General from 1973 to 1994, the longest continuous tenure in ECF's history, presiding over the research institutes, the ERASMUS Bureau, and the post-1989 engagement with Central and Eastern Europe. His departure at the end of 1994 is confirmed by the Convention of 1995. The Foundation's institutional record confirms Rüdiger Stephan as Director from 1995 to 2001, consistent with his role as Chairman of AICE and, from January 1997, as ECF representative. Gottfried Wagner served as Secretary-General from 2002 to 2009. Katherine Watson served as Director from 2009 to 2018, and André Wilkens has directed the Foundation since 2018.

4.1 Precursors to ERASMUS:
Joint Study Programmes and Short Study Visits

4.2 Eurydice:
The Information Architecture of European Education Policy

4.3 The ERASMUS Bureau: Europe's Flagship Mobility Programme

4.4 TEMPUS and Educational Cooperation
in Post-1989 Eastern Europe

4.5 Beyond ERASMUS: Artistic Mobility, Cultural Exchange,
and the Tandem Programme

IV.
Europe in Motion — Education and Mobility

View of the first building that housed the ERASMUS Bureau, on Rue d'Arlon, Brussels. Photo: Jean Boucher/ECF-546_1

Information stand organised by the European Unit of *EURYDICE* on the full range of Community programmes in the fields of education and training. Photo: Photothèque Unité Européenne d'EURYDICE/ HAEU, *(left)* ECF-545_1, *(right)* HAEU, ECF-545_2

4.1

Precursors to ERASMUS: Joint Study Programmes and Short Study Visits

ECF's contribution to European educational policy, which has been central to its mission from the outset, rested on the conviction that the free movement of students and scholars across national frontiers was a structural precondition for a genuinely European intellectual and civic community.

Working in sustained collaboration with the European Commission, the Foundation designed and tested two pioneering mobility schemes from 1977: *the Joint Study Programme* (JSP), enabling universities in different countries to establish cooperative institutional frameworks for mutual student and staff exchange, and *Short Study Visits*, providing flexible support for individual researchers.

Their purpose was to generate the evidence base concerning the institutional mechanisms, administrative requirements, and policy frameworks required to operate student exchange at a continental scale. From 1978, the Institute of Education, later renamed the European Institute on Education and Social Policy, administered the JSP scheme from Amsterdam on behalf of the Commission. In October 1980, this responsibility was transferred to the Institute's Brussels office.

4.2

Eurydice: The Information Architecture of European Education Policy

In 1980, ECF was entrusted by the European Commission with the establishment and management of the *European Information Network for Policy Makers in Education* (Eurydice).

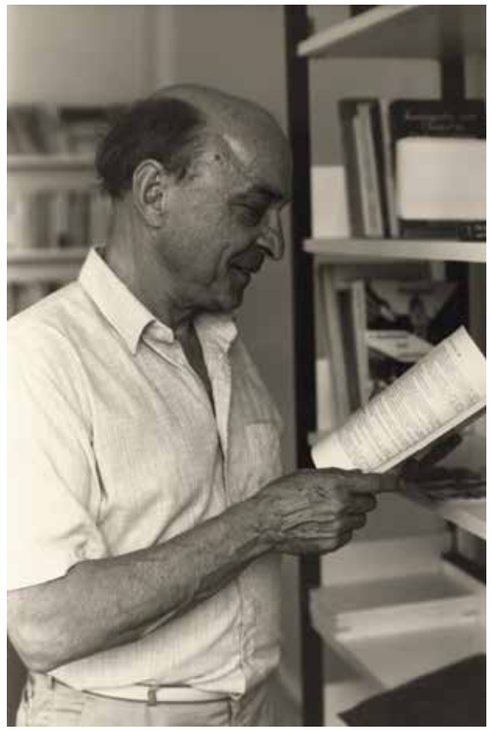
At a time when comparable data on European education systems were methodologically inconsistent, fragmented across national languages, and in many cases inaccessible to cross-border practitioners, *Eurydice* performed a foundational function: it created the shared informational infrastructure without which evidence-based education policy at the European level was operationally impossible.

The *Network* was managed through the Office for Cooperation in Education. ECF's operational management of Eurydice concluded at the end of 1994, when responsibility was transferred directly to the European Commission. The Network has continued to operate under successive Commission programmes and remains today one of the principal comparative education databases in Europe — a durable institutional legacy of ECF's operational engagement with European education policy.

Portrait of HRH Princess Margriet at *ERASMUS/TEMPUS* Meeting in 1991.
Photo: Benelux Press/HAEU, ECF-517_2

ERASMUS Bureau staff busy at the Salon de l'Etudiant soon after the programme's launch, Brussels, 1987. Photo: Unknown author/HAEU, ECF-546_2

Office for Cooperation in Education (OCE) at work preparing for the Brussels Conference in late 1985, which preceded the launch of the European Commission's proposal for the ERASMUS Programme.
Photo: Unknown author/HAEU, ECF-546_4



Portrait of Ladislav Čerych. Photo: Unknown author/HAEU, ECF-547

The ERASMUS Bureau: Europe's Flagship Mobility Programme

4.3

When the ERASMUS programme was formally launched in 1987, ECF had already been entrusted, since the late 1970s, with the design of precursor schemes and subsequently with their operational management through to institutional maturity via the Brussels-based ERASMUS Bureau — an engagement that represents the most consequential programme commitment in the Foundation's history.

By December 1989, the Bureau employed more than forty staff and operated alongside ECF's existing Office for Cooperation in Education, the body that had managed *Eurydice* since 1980 and which became formally independent in January 1991.

The two structures coexisted from 1987 to 1991 as parallel vehicles serving distinct Commission mandates. After the Office became independent, the ERASMUS Bureau continued as ECF's sole Brussels management vehicle for the programme. Concurrently, from 1991, ECF administered the *TEMPUS* programme through a separate vehicle, the European Cooperation Fund.

From 1991 to 1994 both programmes therefore ran in parallel under distinct institutional vehicles. *ERASMUS* rapidly became the European Community's most visible cultural programme, supporting tens of thousands of student exchanges annually and generating a generation of mobile graduates whose transnational educational experiences contributed measurably to European civic identification.

The Foundation's engagement extended beyond operational management to evaluative research, impact assessments, and policy analyses that allowed the programme to be iteratively refined during its foundational phase.

ECF's ERASMUS management contract ended on 31 May 1995, when the Consortium Etape in Brussels assumed management responsibilities for the successor *SOCRATES* programme under a new contract with the Commission.

TEMPUS and Educational Cooperation in Post-1989 Eastern Europe

4.4

In 1990, the European Community launched the *Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Studies* (TEMPUS) programme — designed to support educational cooperation between Western, Central and Eastern European higher education institutions during the period of systemic transition following 1989. Its intellectual origins were visible as early as 1 December 1989.

On that date, Ladislav Čerych, already consulting for the European Commission on *Poland–Hungary Assistance for Economic Reconstruction* (PHARE), described to the ECF Executive Committee a forthcoming mobility initiative modelled on *ERASMUS* for Poland and Hungary — the programme that would later become *TEMPUS*.

ECF managed the initiative from 1991 to 1994 through the European Cooperation Fund, bringing to bear both the operational expertise accumulated across a decade of *ERASMUS*-adjacent work and the established relationships with Central and Eastern European academic and cultural communities cultivated since the mid-1980s.

(previous page, left) STEP Beyond Travel Grants 2003 — Awarded travel journeys. /Source: ECF
(previous page, right) STEP Beyond Travel Grants 2008 — Awarded travel journeys. /Source: ECF
(this page) STEP Beyond Travel Grants 2013 — Awarded travel journeys. /Source: ECF

Beyond ERASMUS: Artistic Mobility, Cultural Exchange, and the Tandem Programme

4.5

The conclusion of ECF's operational management of *TEMPUS* in 1994 and *ERASMUS* in 1995 inaugurated a new phase in which the Foundation's commitment to mobility as a political and cultural instrument was pursued through targeted programmes for artists, cultural practitioners, and civil society actors.

APEXchanges, launched in 1994, provided travel grants for artists from Central and Eastern Europe for whom the removal of Cold War barriers had not yet translated into genuine professional access to Western European opportunities.

STEP Beyond Travel Grants (2003–2019) supported cultural practitioners across Europe and its neighbourhood for more than fifteen years. ECF also provided institutional and financial support to allied independent mobility funds and platforms: the Roberto Cimetta Fund, dedicated to cross-Mediterranean and Euro-Arab cultural mobility; the Thomassen Fund, which supported cultural management training through the European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres (ENCATC); and On the Move, an information and training platform on cultural mobility developed with IETM. All three were active participants in the ECF-convened Mobility Meeting of 28 September 2006 in Amsterdam.

The *Tandem* programme, developed in partnership with *MitOst* and implemented across multiple geographic and thematic contexts (*Tandem East, Tandem Shaml, Tandem Community, Tandem Participation*), has, since 2011, convened approximately 500 independent cultural organisations and fostered the professional development of over 550 cultural managers from more than 160 cities across 35 countries in the wider European context. The programme provides a structured environment for the cultivation of substantive, enduring relationships, grounded in shared artistic interests, a commitment to creative exploration, and collaborative practice. Within this framework, *Tandem*'s overarching vision is to enable the emergence of interconnected creative communities and to sustain the long-term impact of their collaborative endeavours.

5.1 Recognising the Divided Continent:
ECF and the Cold War Cultural Agenda

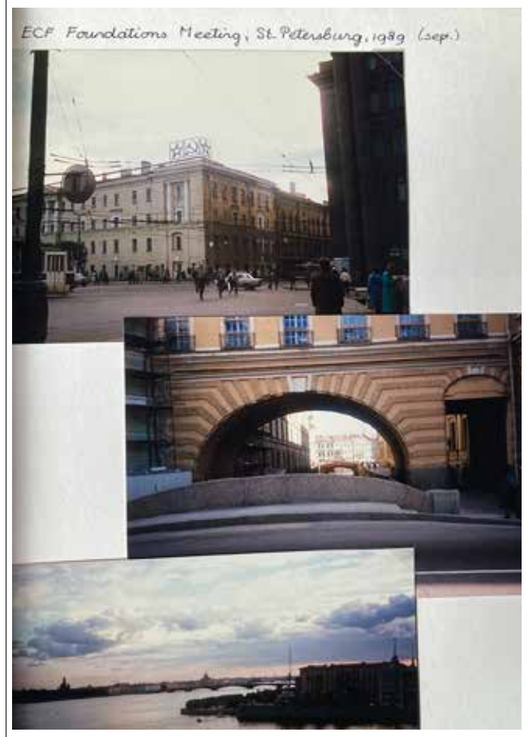
5.2 Supporting Democratic Transition:
The East West Parliamentary Practice Project

5.3 Cultural Policy Support for Post-Communist Societies

V.

Beyond the Wall — East-West Relations and the Democratic Transition

Seminar: *Cultural Cooperation on the Eve of the XXIst Century: The Role of Foundations*. Leningrad, 1989. Photo: Unknown author / HAEU, *(top left)* ECF-515_4, *(bottom left)* ECF-515_1



Seminar: *Cultural Cooperation on the Eve of the XXIst Century: The Role of Foundations*, Leningrad, 1989. Photo: Unknown author / HAEU, ECF-515_5

Portrait of Jill Adler, 1993. Photo: Unknown author / HAEU, ECF-536

(top right) Conference: *The Future of Cultural Cooperation between the Countries of Western, Central and Eastern Europe: The Role of Foundations*, Vienna, 12-14 April 1991. Photo: Unknown author / HAEU, 541_4
(bottom right) Timothy Garton Ash and Robert Picht at the conference. Photo: Unknown author / HAEU, 541_6

Recognising the Divided Continent: ECF and the Cold War Cultural Agenda

5.1

By the mid-1980s, ECF had begun formally to articulate a conviction that had been accumulating across its programmes for several years: that the Cold War division of Europe was irreconcilable with the Foundation's understanding of European culture as a shared, historically continuous, and geographically inclusive civilisation.

This conviction received authoritative expression in a formal Declaration of the Board of Governors, which affirmed that the common heritage and values of Europe's peoples transcended the political boundary between East and West and committed ECF to programmes actively promoting exchange across that divide.

In September 1989, ECF organised in Leningrad the conference *Cultural Cooperation on the Eve of the XXIst Century: The Role of Foundations* (9–12 September 1989), convening participants from both sides of the ideological divide. This conference took place two months before the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989, the same day on which ECF co-founded the European Foundation Centre (EFC). The two events are distinct: the Leningrad conference was an ECF programme event, while the co-founding of the EFC constituted a separate institutional act.

The Leningrad seminar was organised jointly by the USSR Cultural Foundation and ECF in cooperation with the Hague Club, with R. Picht preparing the foundational document. It was conceived as the first stage of a three-part dialogue: Leningrad (private foundations from East and West), Helsinki (Western foundations), Strasbourg (governmental and non-governmental organisations) under the Foundation's auspices. At a subsequent Executive Committee meeting, the Chairman noted the immense interest generated and proposed the European Foundation Centre in Brussels as both the institutional vehicle and the funder for the Strasbourg stage.

After hosting the *Parliamentary Practice and Procedure* workshop in Vienna in 1990, ECF convened a major conference in the same city the following year, titled *The Future of Cultural Cooperation between the Countries of Western, Central and Eastern Europe: The Role of Foundations* (12–14 April 1991), reflecting the expanded scope of its post-1989 agenda.

Supporting Democratic Transition: The East West Parliamentary Practice Project

5.2

ECF co-founded, in partnership with the Ford Foundation, the East-West Parliamentary Practice Project (1990), an initiative designed to support parliaments in Central European and former Soviet states through institutional expertise, exchange programmes, and capacity building for legislators and legislative staff. The Project, led by Jill Adler, operated at the intersection of political science, institutional development, and cultural diplomacy, facilitating connections between experienced parliamentarians from established democracies and their counterparts navigating democratic transition.

The programme became a fully independent foundation in 1995, while remaining formally part of the ECF network until 2006.

Cultural Policy Support for Post-Communist Societies

Portrait of Elizabeth Winter, 1988. Photo: Unknown author / HAEU, ECF-550

5.3

The *Central and Eastern European Publishing Project* (CEEPP), established in Oxford in 1986, was conceived by Timothy Garton Ash and Ralf Dahrendorf, with Elizabeth Winter serving as Director, and constituted a multi-foundation initiative supported by the Ford Foundation, the Open Society Fund, the Rockefeller Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, and the European Cultural Foundation, which was among the co-founders providing early support for independent publishing in a region where cultural infrastructure was already under pressure. This initiative provided important precedents and relationships that later informed ECF's more direct post-1989 programming.

After 1989, the Foundation developed a sustained programme of cultural policy assistance directly addressing the need to reconstruct cultural governance frameworks in societies where state-socialist structures had been dismantled.

The *Central and Eastern European Book Projects* (CEEPB), established in 1992, addressed the specific vulnerability of independent publishing in post-communist societies. The programme *Diagnoses*, launched in 1994, emerged from two informal meetings held at the Foundation, in which Adriaan van der Staay and Mohammed Arkoun played a central role in shaping its conceptual framework. Conceived as a platform for addressing key issues in the cultural and intellectual exchanges between Europe and the regions of the Middle East and North Africa, the programme was developed within the scope of ECF's newly defined Mediterranean priority. Its inaugural session, dedicated to the role of intellectuals in the Mediterranean region, took place in Rotterdam in October 1994.

Programmes including *Policies for Culture* in Central and Eastern Europe provided research, training, and policy expertise to emerging cultural administrators and nascent civil society organisations. ECF supported these initiatives until 2009.

Drawing by Dan Perjovschi, part of a series produced for the programme: *Policies for Culture*, 2006. / Source: Courtesy of the artist

6.1 The Mediterranean Dimension:
Literature, Language, and Cultural Dialogue

6.2 The Balkans:
Conflict, Transition, and Cultural Capacity-Building

VI.

The EU Neighborhood: Opening Dialogue, Enlarging the Minds

Odile Chenal at *Which Languages for Europe* programme conference, Amsterdam, 1998. Photo: Unknown author / HAEU, ECF-518_1

Workshop for translators: *Mémoires de la Mediterranée*, Toledo, 1996. Photo: Unknown author / HAEU, ECF-520_2

Portrait of Odile Chenal, 1996. Photo: Unknown author / HAEU, ECF-533

The Mediterranean Dimension: Literature, Language, and Cultural Dialogue

6.1

ECF's engagement with the Mediterranean region preceded by several years the European Union's formal adoption of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership at the Barcelona Conference of 1995. Whilst European attention was focused on the East, ECF noted that the South risked being marginalised, and with it the issues inextricably bound up with that marginalisation, such as migration, the legacy of colonialism, and intellectual and cultural exchange.

At the Board of Governors meeting held in Amsterdam on 31 May 1991, Jorge Semprún — novelist, former Resistance member, and at that time Spain's Minister of Culture — participated as an invited guest of honour and addressed the Foundation on the significance of Southern Europe and the importance of cooperation with countries of the Mediterranean basin in European cultural history. His intervention framed the Mediterranean not as Europe's periphery but as a central component of its civilisational narrative. The presentation served as an important institutional catalyst. The Board decided to explore Mediterranean projects as a new programmatic priority, and two expert groups convened in Amsterdam in the months that followed.

The programme development that followed included Mémoires de la Méditerranée (1994–1999), which fostered literary and intellectual exchange across the region; and Which Languages for Europe? (1998–2001), an open platform for debate on the linguistic situation in Europe.

Mediterranean Meeting Points (MMP) was an initiative designed to stimulate renewed contributions to dialogue and cooperation between Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East; the programme provided grants to support mobility and to facilitate encounters among young professionals active in journalism, literature, publishing, and the humanities across the Mediterranean region.

In 2002, the European Cultural Foundation initiated the *Enlargement of Minds* action line, conceived as a structured programme to critically address the cultural ramifications of European Union enlargement, combining research activities, expert gatherings, and artistic and journalistic practices. Placed under the patronage of Patrick Cox, the programme was articulated through a series of thematic seminars held in 2003-2004, each focusing on the EU's evolving borderlands: *Crossing Perspectives: Cultural Cooperation with South East Europe* (Amsterdam, June 2003), *Moving Borders: The EU and its New Neighbours* (Kraków, October 2003), and *Beyond Enlargement — Opening Eastwards* (Toledo, November 2003) and *Sharing Cultures: A Contribution to cultural policies for Europe* (Rotterdam, July 2004).

Workshop: *Training of Trainers, part of Art for Social Change*, Belgrade, 2000. Photo: Unknown author / *(left)* HAEU, ECF-519_1, *(right)* ECF-519_2

The Balkans: Conflict, Transition, and Cultural Capacity-Building

6.2

ECF's engagement in South-Eastern Europe intensified through the late 1990s and 2000s as the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia created both urgent humanitarian needs and a longer-term imperative to support the cultural and civic infrastructure of societies simultaneously experiencing conflict, reconstruction, and aspirations towards European integration.

Art for Social Change (1997–2004) strengthened the capacity for social integration of disadvantaged young people through artistic initiatives and activities. *Kultura Nova* (2000–2004), implemented in partnership with the Open Society Institute, provided capacity-building to cultural NGOs in Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, and Macedonia.

Policies for Culture (2000–2008), developed with ECUMEST, introduced participatory methodologies to cultural policy design across South-Eastern Europe.

The *Balkan Incentive Fund for Culture* (2006–2011) and the *Balkan Art and Culture Fund* (2011–2016) provided sustained grant support across a decade, constituting a continuous institutional commitment to the region's cultural sector.

7.1 The Television Working Group
and the Idea of a European Media Space
7.2 The Task Force on Television and Prix Europa
7.3 LabforCulture and the Digital Turn
7.4 Display Europe and the Council for European Public Space

VII.

Media and the European Public Sphere

Portrait of George Wedell, Director of European Institute for the Media. Photo: Unknown author/HAEU, ECF-552

George Wedell, Director of European Institute for the Media, conducts a session of the Advanced Seminar in Broadcasting Organisation and Management, Manchester, 1984. Photo: Unknown author/HAEU, ECF-553

7.1

The Television Working Group and the Idea of a European Media Space

ECF's engagement with media as a domain of cultural policy began in 1978 with the establishment of a *European Working Group on Television*, a body whose creation reflected early recognition of broadcasting as structurally important for the formation of public culture and the free circulation of ideas.

The Working Group operated at a significant moment: European television was almost entirely organised along national lines, and the implications of emerging satellite and cable technologies for cultural diversity and broadcasting sovereignty were only beginning to be understood.

On 1 January 1983, the European Institute for the Media was established within the University of Manchester in collaboration with ECF and with the support of the Greater Manchester County Council, becoming one of the first academic centres in Europe for research on media policy, media economics, and the social dimensions of broadcasting in a supranational context. The Institute was a formal member of the ECF network of Institutes. Between 1983 and 1986, ECF's engagement with media questions progressively elevated television to a Board-level strategic priority, formally recognised in 1986.

By December 1989, the Institute had launched the *European Television and Film Forum* in Luxembourg, extending its activities into East–West media cooperation. The Institute provided intellectual grounding for arguments concerning public service broadcasting and cultural diversity that would become increasingly contested as commercial television expanded through the 1980s.

Prix Europa meeting in Amsterdam, 1988. Photo: Unknown author/HAEU, ECF-551_1

7.2

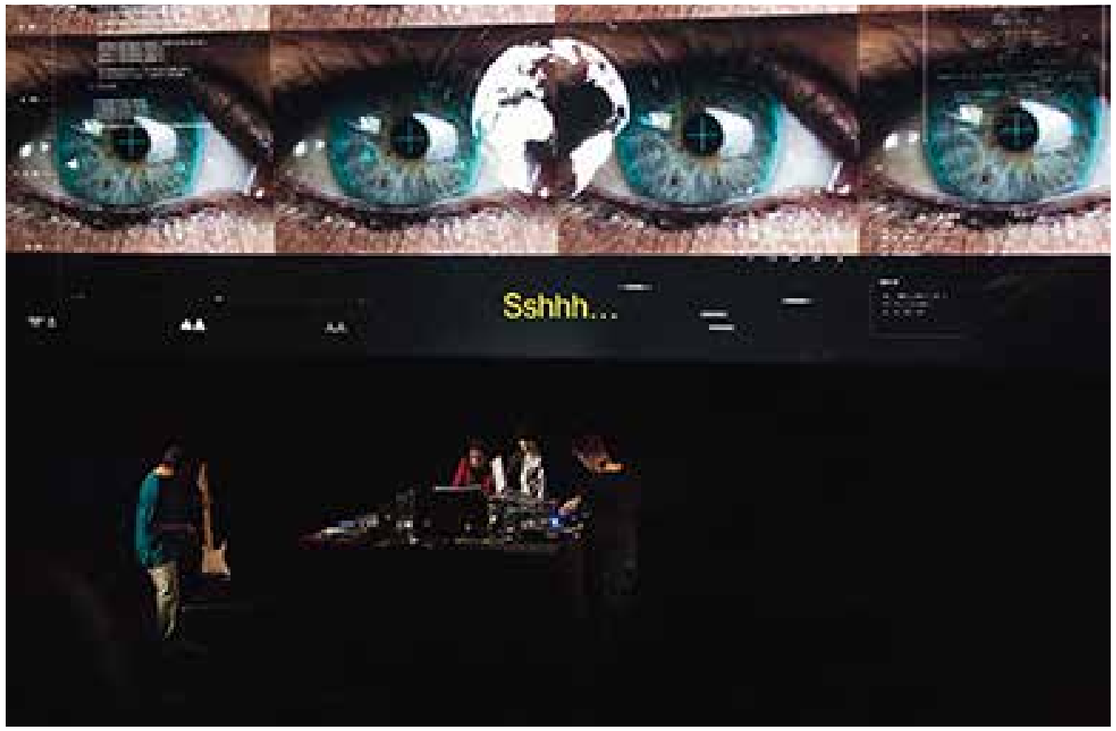
The Task Force on Television and Prix Europa

In 1986, ECF's Board of Governors formally adopted television as a strategic priority.

The Foundation established a high-level *Task Force on Television* in 1987, chaired by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, former President of France, and mandated to examine the conditions under which European television could develop a genuine supranational dimension while preserving cultural diversity and fostering the common reference points required for a European public sphere.

Its report, published in 1988, became a landmark document in media policy. In the same year ECF — in collaboration with the Council of Europe and CIRCOM — launched *Prix Europa* in Amsterdam: a competitive award recognising outstanding quality in European television, radio, and, subsequently, online production.

Prix Europa later became an independent organisation and continues to operate.



€uroVisions, a live-cinema performance by the European Souvenirs, presented as part of *Doc Nèxt tNetwork* at the Eye Film Institute, Amsterdam, 2014. Photo: Xander Remkes/ Source: ECF

7.3

LabforCulture and the Digital Turn

In the early 2000s, ECF was among the first cultural foundations in Europe to engage systematically with the democratic potential and structural risks of the emerging digital media landscape.

The Foundation created a digital platform specifically dedicated to connecting artists and cultural organisations across national borders, *LabforCulture*, initiated in 2004 with EU funding support. ECF's subsequent media programmes simultaneously engaged with the question of democratic representation in an increasingly fragmented commercial media environment.

After the 2008 financial crisis, people's voices rose in squares — and, for the first time, online. The *Youth and Media Programme* mobilised young media makers and cultural organisations in the *Doc Next Network*, reflecting a new participatory media culture shaped by young people, migrants, and activists who were no longer merely consumers of media but active producers. ECF embraced this energy and has since continued to invest in initiatives supporting independent journalism and media activism in the service of a European public sphere.

Among the programmes developed in this context are *MediActivism*, *ReMapping Europe*, *Displaced in Media*, and *Reframing Migrants in the European Media*.

7.4

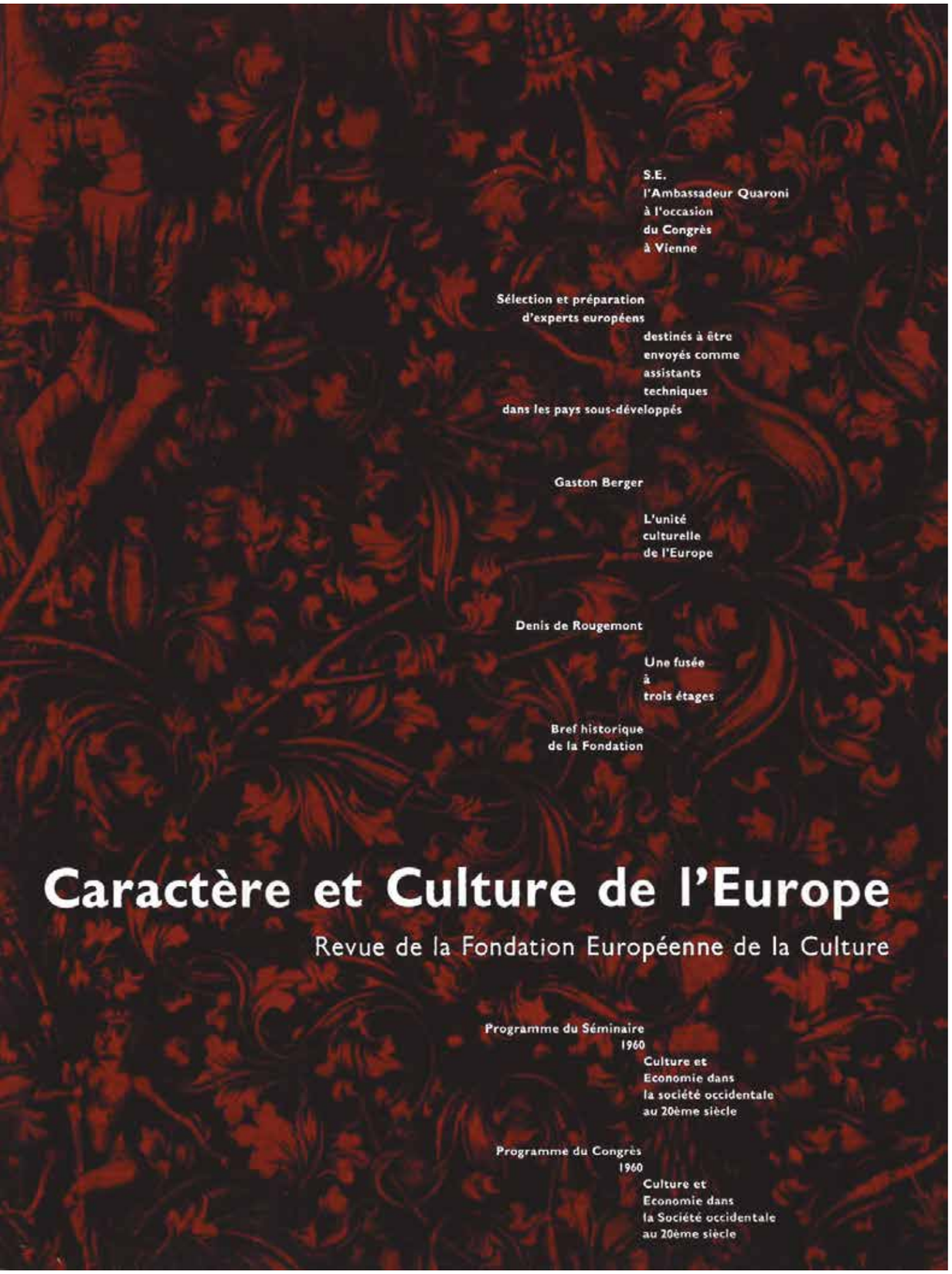
Display Europe and the Council for European Public Space

From 2020 onwards, ECF's longstanding commitment to a European public sphere has found its most advanced institutional expression in two complementary initiatives.

Display Europe is an open-source public media platform developed in partnership with European public broadcasters and cultural institutions.

It aggregates and makes accessible curated European cultural and journalistic content across linguistic frontiers, directly addressing the fragmentation of European public discourse at a historical moment when the challenges confronting European democracies are inherently transnational.

The Council for European Public Space brings together cultural and civic organisations committed to the proposition that a functioning European democracy requires a shared communicative infrastructure. Together, these initiatives represent the contemporary evolution of a commitment that ECF has sustained since 1978.



Cover of *Caractère et Culture de l'Europe*, n.4, 1960. / Source: ECF

8.1 Early Advocacy: Council of Europe Partnership, Tax Reform Studies, and Founding Infrastructure

8.2 The Tindemans Report, the Brussels European Cooperation Fund, and Advocacy for a European Foundation

8.3 Establishing the European Foundation Centre

8.4 European Campaigns: From 70 Cents for Culture to the Cultural Deal for Europe

8.5 Publishing, Documentation, and Institutional Memory

VIII. Advocating for Culture — Philanthropy for Europe

Early Advocacy: Council of Europe Partnership, Tax Reform Studies, and Founding Infrastructure

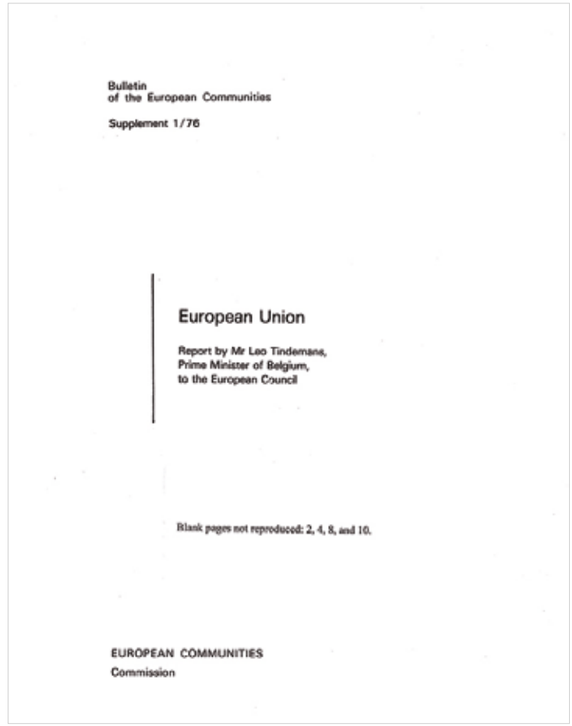
8.1

From the early 1960s, ECF understood its institutional mission as encompassing a structural advocacy function: to strengthen the legal, institutional, and financial conditions under which cultural philanthropy could operate effectively across Europe.

The Foundation established a formal relationship with the Council of Europe through two distinct agreements. The first was signed on 2 July 1960 at Soestdijk Palace between Lodovico Benvenuti, Council of Europe Secretary-General, and HRH Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, ECF President, establishing the terms of institutional cooperation. A second and distinct agreement, not a renewal but a new instrument, motivated by the creation of the Conseil de la Coopération Culturelle, was signed on 10 November 1965 at Soestdijk Palace between Secretary-General Peter Smithers and ECF Secretary-General George Sluizer.

The relationship remained operative through observer status into the 1980s and beyond, establishing a framework for sustained engagement with European intergovernmental bodies. ECF undertook systematic studies on tax legislation for charitable organisations across European countries, addressing the foundational infrastructure on which independent cultural funding depended. Fact-finding missions to European countries and, from the early 1970s, to the United States generated the comparative knowledge and international networks through which ECF could advocate with authority.

In 1973, Raymond Georis's first year as Secretary-General, an important network structure was established: the Dutch Venice Committee, extending the Foundation's reach into heritage philanthropy.



Bulletin
of the European Communities

Supplement 1/76

European Union

Report by Mr Leo Tindemans,
Prime Minister of Belgium,
to the European Council

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EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
Commission

Report by Leo Tindemans, Prime Minister of Belgium, to the European Council, Brussels, 1976. / Source: Archive of European Integration (AEI), Bulletin of the European Communities, Supplement 1/76.

The Tindemans Report, the Brussels European Cooperation Fund, and Advocacy for a European Foundation

8.2

In 1976, the *Tindemans Report*, submitted to the European Council by Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans, recommended the establishment of a European Foundation dedicated to cultural exchange, civic education, and mutual understanding among Europeans. The Foundation responded by intensifying its engagement with European institutions.

In 1976–77, ECF created a European Cooperation Fund in Brussels, formally constituted at an assembly in The Hague on 19 October 1976 and receiving Belgian legal personality by royal decree on 12 January 1977. Its founders were Frans Alting von Geusau, J. E. Chabert, W. H. Welling, and Raymond Georis.

By 1991, the Fund was operating at 51 rue de la Concorde in Brussels, with Gaston Deurinck as Chairman and Raymond Georis as Director, serving as the institutional umbrella for ECF's management of the *TEMPUS* programme (1991–1994).

The Brussels Fund was a founding member of the European Foundation Centre (EFC). The Fund was subsequently reconstituted as *Association for Innovative Cooperation in Europe* (AICE). An agreement was signed in 1995 between AICE and the European Cultural Foundation, under which the former assumed responsibility for the activities of the European Cooperation Fund on 1 January 1996. Its by-laws were approved by the General Assembly on 21 October 1996.

Article I of the AICE statutes confirms this institutional continuity, describing the organisation as "formerly known as the European Cooperation Fund". From 1997, the Council comprised six foundation members: the European Cultural Foundation, King Baudouin Foundation, Charities Aid Foundation, Fondation de France, Compagnia di San Paolo, and Robert Bosch Stiftung.

The Copenhagen Summit of the European Council (5–6 April 1978) had already taken a decision that the future European Foundation would collaborate with ECF and analogous institutions. This position was subsequently recalled in an ECF Board of Governors declaration of 18 May 1979, citing the Summit directly: «*Dans le respect de son indépendance, la Fondation européenne collaborera de façon appropriée avec la F.E.C. et d'autres institutions analogues.*»

8.3

Establishing the European Foundation Centre

On 9 November 1989, the day the Berlin Wall fell, ECF became one of the seven founding members of the European Foundation Centre (EFC).

The EFC's founding documents identified the following members of its Executive Committee: The Charities Aid Foundation, the European Cooperation Fund, the European Cultural Foundation, the Fondation de France, the King Baudouin Foundation, the Stichting Koningin Juliana Fonds, and the Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft.

The formal establishment of the EFC on 9 November 1989 was therefore the culmination of a process initiated and led by the Foundation. The timing was not accidental. The Centre was created in recognition of the new responsibilities that the transformation of Central and Eastern Europe was placing on civil society and on the European philanthropic sector. Its mandate was to promote information exchange among European foundations, to strengthen the sector's collective capacity and visibility, and to support foundations' engagement with an institutional landscape being fundamentally reconfigured by the collapse of Soviet-aligned regimes.

Through the EFC's *New Europe Programme*, ECF contributed to the emergence of a non-profit sector with genuinely European scope and ambition in post-communist countries. ECF was also among the key early members of the *Network of European Foundations* (NEF), established to foster collaborative philanthropy and pooled funding across Europe. By 1 December 1989, just three weeks after the formal establishment, the ECF Executive Committee was already planning a Special Fund meeting with EFC members for 19 December 1989, demonstrating the immediacy with which the new institution was mobilised to address the East–West challenge.

Advertising brochure for the Platform for Intercultural Europe and Rainbow Paper. Photo: Daniele Greene/Source: ECF

8.4

European Campaigns: From 70 Cents for Culture to the Cultural Deal for Europe

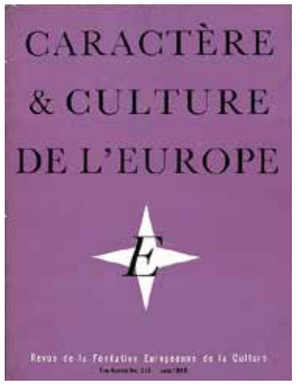
In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, ECF's advocacy assumed an increasingly public and explicitly political character. The *70 Cents for Culture campaign* (2004, developed with Culture Action Europe) translated the principle of proportionate cultural investment into a concrete fiscal demand.

We Are More challenged the marginalisation of culture in European public discourse. *More Europe — Culture in EU External Relations* engaged with the place of culture in European foreign policy.

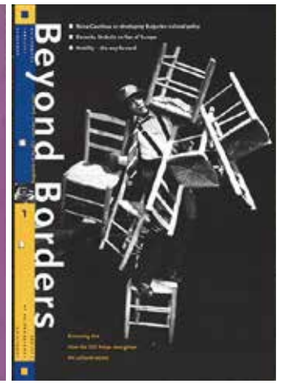
The *Platform for Intercultural Europe* (2008), together with the *Rainbow Paper*, provided a structured forum for European cultural civil society to engage with EU institutions.

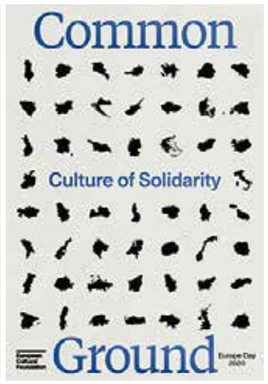
The *Cultural Deal for Europe*, from 2019, brought together a broad coalition of cultural organisations around a shared policy agenda addressed to EU institutions. Since 2022, the *European Sentiment Compass*, an annual survey, has provided independent evidence on attitudes towards European institutions.

The *Share Europe Initiative* originates from *The New Schuman Plan*, launched in 2023 by the European Cultural Foundation in collaboration with Philea, Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, and Friends of Europe. The programme calls on philanthropic actors to commit one per cent of their total giving to European public goods, and aims to provide both digital and physical spaces in which individuals across national borders can exchange ideas, experiences, and artistic expressions — thereby contributing to the development of a European media sphere grounded in public values and inclusive of marginalised groups, including refugees and migrants.



Cover of *Caractère et Culture de l'Europe*, n.2/3, 1960. / Source: ECF
Cover of *Beyond Borders*, n.1, 2001. / Source: ECF





Cover of *Common Ground*, n.1, 2020. / Source: ECF
Cover of *Stories of Europe – 65 Years of the European Cultural Foundation*, 2019. / Source: ECF

Publishing, Documentation, and Institutional Memory

8.5

Publishing has been integral to ECF's institutional practice since its early years, serving simultaneously as a tool of programmatic dissemination, a vehicle for study reports and conference proceedings, and a means of intellectual influence and public accountability. Annual reports with full financial statements have been produced since 1958, with independent auditing formalised from 1961.

The journal *Caractère et Culture de l'Europe* appeared from 1960 to 1964. Since 1971, numerous newsletters have been issued to provide structured information across a range of domains, including governance bodies and cultural activities, the work of National Committees and scientific projects, as well as the institution's internal organisation and fundraising initiatives.

The 47 volumes of *Plan Europe 2000* (1968–1975, published in eight languages) constitute the most substantial single publication enterprise in the Foundation's history. *Beyond Borders* (2001–2005) documented the Foundation's work in the early 2000s. *Common Ground*, published since 2020, reflects the continuing commitment to public intellectual engagement with questions of European culture, democracy, and solidarity.

Published on the occasion of its 65th anniversary, *Stories of Europe – 65 Years of the European Cultural Foundation* reflects the Foundation's activities within a broader historical and institutional framework.

A Pioneer in Every Era

From grant-maker to think tank, from think tank to institution-builder, from institution-builder to programme manager, from programme manager to advocate, the European Cultural Foundation has undergone a continuous and layered evolution of function across more than seven decades.

What is remarkable is not only the range of roles ECF has assumed, but the consistency with which it has assumed them before the need for such roles was widely recognised: student mobility schemes before ERASMUS; research institutes on education and environmental policy before European governance in these fields had taken institutional form; engagement with Eastern Europe before 1989 made such engage-ment politically obvious; engagement with the Mediterranean before the Barcelona Process; and attention to the democratic implications of media before most cultural institutions had engaged seriously with the internet.

This consistent anticipatory capacity is the structural consequence of independence. As an institution accountable neither to electoral cycles nor to member-state consensus, ECF has been able to act on the basis of evidence, relationships, and conviction. Its most enduring contribution to European history may lie in this sustained demonstration, repeated over seven decades: that independent cultural institutions are not peripheral to European democracy, but constitutive of it.

— Mattia Torelli

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In November 1953, a small group gathered at the Pavillon Henri IV near Paris to translate a post-war cultural vision into an institutional proposal. From that meeting — and from the formal signing of its statutes in Geneva the following year — the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) would grow into one of the most consequential independent actors in the history of European integration.

Over seven decades, the ECF built a transnational network of research institutes on education, environment, and media policy, and designed the precursor schemes that made ERASMUS possible. It promoted cultural exchange across the Iron Curtain before the fall of the Berlin Wall transformed the political landscape of the continent, and fostered dialogue with the Mediterranean well ahead of the Barcelona Process.

Building European Belonging: Inside the Archives of the European Cultural Foundation presents this history on the occasion of the opening of the ECF's archival fonds at the Historical Archives of the European Union at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. The catalogue is conceived as a tool to accompany readers through key moments in ECF's trajectory, supported by a visual narrative drawn from the Foundation's archival holdings — an acknowledgement that the work of independent cultural institutions belongs at the centre and not the margins of the European story.

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