30 years EFA

The European Free Alliance:
The voice of nations and peoples of Europe
In 1981 as an answer to the lasting difficulties met by stateless nations, minorities and regions to have a voice in European institutions, a group of democratic nationalist and regionalist parties agree on the foundation of the Brussels Convention. This foundation of the first enduring association of democratic nationalists, regional autonomists and independentists coincides with the European Parliament becoming a representative, elected, institution. The EFA is thus a child of representative politics at European level.
For more than one reason I, as president of the European Free Alliance (EFA), am very happy today.

There are many reasons to celebrate. First of all, I am particularly proud to pay tribute to our European political party EFA, which has borne fruit over its 30 years of life. Secondly as a history professor, I feel it is also my duty to bring to your attention the 60 years preceding EFA. During 2011 fifteen of our member parties celebrate important anniversaries. Finally I believe whilst we celebrate our 30th anniversary, holding our breath and reviewing the progress, the steps forward, the acknowledgments of our political family, we also have to look forward to the future.

1920-1980
Our story starts in 1920, the year of the poppy, the year Maurits Coppieters was born. He became the first EFA Member of the European Parliament. 1920 is a landmark for peace and for EFA. One of EFA’s cornerstone principles has always been peace and peaceful political action. In 1921, our oldest EFA member party the Partito Sardo d’Azione (the Sardinian action party) was founded. This year they celebrate their 90th anniversary.

During the period 1920-1980, nearly half of our current members started as political parties, which preceded our European political party. PLAI D Cymru was founded in 1925; and in 1931 ERC, (which celebrates 80 years in 2011) together with the SNP in 1934.

Right after the Second World War, these were followed by the German Minority party in Danmark (Schleswig Partei) in 1945 and the Danish minority party in Germany (Südschleswigscher Wählerverband SSW) in 1946; the Bayernpartei was also set up in 1946 and also celebrates 65 years in 2011. All of them have become EFA members in recent years.
In 1951 Mebyon Kernow was founded, they celebrate 60 years of political action this year. Volksunie, the Flemish nationalist party, was founded in 1954 and was the most important motor and catalysing factor before EFA was created and thus continued for its first two decades of action.

In the sixties it was the turn of the Fryske Nasjonale party (FNP) in 1962, Union Démocratique Bretonne (UDB) in 1964 and the Partido Andalucista (PA) in 1965 to be set up and in the seventies parties like the Movimento Autonomist Occitanno in 1970 (later WVAP and Partit Occitan - POC), the Mouvement Region Savoie (MRS) in 1971, (it enjoys its 40th anniversary this year), Enotna Lista and Slovenska Skupnost in 1975, PSM (Mallorca) in 1976 (35th Anniversary this year), UPC (later Partitu di a Nazione Corsa – PNC) in Corsica in 1977.

Together, some of these 18 parties created a discerning group, in the run up to the first direct European elections in 1979 and began forming the European Free Alliance. In 1979, the European Parliament, which for decades had remained a consultative assembly with no legislative powers, became one of the most powerful legislatures in the world. During the following 30 years, EFA would invest in that political space and would become an active part of this crucial European political arena.

1981-2011
EFA fundamentally fights for the freedom of peoples and nations. We also strive for the equality of nations, cultures and languages. EFA has fought for freedom for 30 years, real freedom for all peoples of Europe, and is deeply committed to fight for another 30 years more. Of course, EFA’s activity and political involvement did not start in Parliament. One of EFA’s driving principles is self-determination. We promote the emergence of truly constructive interactions between Europe’s Nations, peoples, communities and citizens, by claiming collective rights, more autonomy and very often full independence.

Such cohesion is only possible if such internal diversity is itself governed by the same demands of tolerance, recognition and solidarity that EFA is externally advocating.

This idea began to take shape over 30 years ago and politically crystallized when EFA’s fundamental principles were first expressed and synthesized in the 1979 Declaration of Bastia, eloquently stressing its attachment to a Europe of Peoples... not actual States, Peoples! This historic declaration also emphasised the importance of protecting the collective rights and dignity of these hitherto unrecognized, and often to various degrees, repressed Peoples.

This vision and programme for Europe arose from a constant, dynamic and thorough groundwork of militants, on which the EFA of 2011 can still rely. EFA’s success is a clear expression of the quality of the work achieved by our European mosaic
of militancy. This is constantly fed and updated by dynamic youth movements, who ensure that our vision, aims and work always stay up to date, relevant, accurate, and fully connected to the best vibrations of this fantastic European continent, its immediate surroundings, and the rest of World, to which Europe is and should always be linked to in full solidarity and rich interdependence.

EFA itself is diverse. EFA members interpret a rich manifold of European collective realities, backgrounds, real power, and hopes. It has always been important for every EFA member to ensure internal cohesion among members and partners. Such cohesion is only possible if such internal diversity is itself governed by the same demands of tolerance, recognition and solidarity that EFA is externally advocating. EFA’s success in doing so has made its lasting and active presence possible in the whole European political arena.

It is also a clear sign of maturity that EFA can now count on the forward looking expertise and analysis provided by the Foundation Centre Maurits Coppieters (CMC). The CMC is a ‘Political Foundation at European Level’ and has been recognized by the European Parliament since 2007. The CMC works in close cooperation with its member organizations and the European Free Alliance as a platform for new ideas. As such, this young and dynamic foundation is ensuring that EFA will always be linked to the best, most groundbreaking and stimulating visions, whose implementation EFA remains responsible for.

To conclude, EFA could not neglect the fact that, while EFA is looking back over its 30 years of life and looking forward to the next 30, other Peoples near to Europe are literally fighting, taking on the ultimate danger possible which could mean losing their own lives, to enjoy political and personal freedom, by democratically living together and taking decisions. The ineffectiveness, a tragedy in itself, of repression and regime driven brutality is in effect showing what constant and lasting energy is displayed by people and Peoples fighting for emancipation, rights and true democracy.

The next 30 years in the future will be described as a time, where through powerful basic democratic movements, new states within the current European borders of 2011, emerged and gained independence. EFA promotes this democratic wave and develops what we call Europe’s internal enlargement even further, which at the same time is a true strengthening of the European Union.

It would be neither decent nor clever at the end of a turbulent 2011, to mention the journey of our own Peoples’ emancipation, without sparing a thought for our Palestinian, Kurdish, Tibetan,... brothers and sisters, who have courageously chosen such a harsh political journey, and an even steeper and much more perilous path towards their emancipation.

Eric Defoort,
President of EFA, The European political party

European Parliament, Brussels
9th of November 2011
The answer to difference is to respect it!

Therein lies a most fundamental principle of peace: respect diversity.

John Hume, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize 1998
1920-1980

the years preceding EFA
1 Poster of PSM from 1976
2 Election campaign FNP; 1966, Balk
3 Demonstration in Galiza against nuclear energy; 1977
4 Demonstration for the Sardinian language; 1975
5 Posters of campaign for the Galician statute of 1936
6 Poster of campaign of ERC; 1936
7 Election Poster from 1920
8 Foundation of Enotna Lista under the motto ‘eknako pravno’ (equal rights); 1975
9 Poster of ‘The Poppy’; 1920
10 Maurits Coppieters. First on the list for Volksunie for the European elections of 1979
11 Electoral poster of the Bayern Partei (BP); 1949
12 Fishermen protest in Prenzance, Cornwall; 1978
13 Plaid Cymru poster on ‘The six men of Pwllheli’; 1925
14 Poster of 1980 demanding the Autonomy for Occitania
15 ‘Vor danske fremtids vej’ (The way to our Danish future). SSW’s poster from the 1950’s

SNP candidate Winnie Ewing, in the campaign for the European elections in 1979
‘Je serai votre Député Européen’

Maurits Coppieters, 1979, Bastia, Corsica
1 Strasbourg, 9th of July 1981, Foundation of EFA with 9 Partners signing
2-3 Brussels, 8-10 January 1981, EFA study days with fltr J. Cevaer, Yann Fouéré, F. Clavelly; fltr F. Clavelly, M. Coppieters, Y. Fouéré
1 Sassari, Cover of Quaderni Sardista from PSd’Az, Contribution to the knowledge on the doctrine of Sardism and its finality
2 Edinburgh, The Scottish industrial resistance, 79 group, nr7, with introduction by A. Salmond
3 Riazor, A Coruña, foundation meeting BNG
1 Brussels, Press Conference, J. Vandemeulebroucke and Y. Fouéré
2-4 Saint-Vincent, Aoste, 6th round table on Regionalism, Yann Fouéré
3 Brussels, EFA visit to the Belgian Parliament, J. Vandemeulebroucke
1 Vitoria-Gasteiz, re-election
C. Garaikoetxea as Lehendakari
2 Cornwall, publication Mebyon Kernow, Making our own decisions
3 Ljouwert, FNP vision on Europe
Strasbourg, visit of FNP with R. Falkena to EFA group with J. Vandemeulebroucke and W. Kuijpers
1986

Saragossa, Foundation of Chunta Aragonesista, National assembly
EFA liket striidorganisaasje foar in oar Europa te warden

Ljouwert, article Leeuwarder Courant on EFA General Assembly and 25 years FNP 2 Basque Country, Carlos Garaikoetxea giving a speech
1988

Brussels, EFA General Assembly
with among them H. Gourmelin,
G. Alirol, B. Lasagabaster,
J. Evans, P. Kylan, D. Williams,
M. Simeoni, F. Moschenross
Brussels, preparing the EP elections, Jill Evans, J. Vandemeulebroucke, Peter Kylan. Donostia, speech of Garaikoetxea after EFA General assembly meeting in Bilbao.
1990

1 Perth, SNP Conference, Scotland’s future - Independence in Europe
2-3 Brno, mass demonstration in favor of Moravian identity, speech of Boleslav Bárta
Brussels, EFA meets Lithuanian President Landsbergis, J. Vandemeulebroucke and M. Simeoni

Strasbourg, European Parliament, speech Carlos Garaikoetxea

1991

1 Brussels, EFA meets Lithuanian President Landsbergis, J. Vandemeulebroucke and M. Simeoni
2 Strasbourg, European Parliament, speech Carlos Garaikoetxea
1992

1. Teruel, Congress of Chunta Aragonesista
2. Barcelona, Rainbow group meeting and Conference on the Construction of the European Union
1 Santiago, BNG group in the Galician Parliament, Xosé-Manuel Beiras (in the middle)
2 Cardiff, EFA General Assembly, G. Alirol, B. Bro, K. Gyonvarch and B. Staes
3 Cardiff, EFA GA, group picture

1993
1 Scotland, European election campaign, Winnie Ewing
2 Corsica, UPC book on Internal autonomy for the Corsican people
3 Lerin, Athens finally recognizing Rainbow-Vinozhito party, Macedonian minority
4 Saragossa, dia Aragonese, National day
1995

1 Saragossa, election night
2 Foundation Régions et Peuples Solidaires R&PS, posters with flags of regions
3 Revelation of FNP election program by Winnie Ewing
4 ERC governmental program, ‘Force, towards independence’
1996

1. Strasbourg, R&PS delegation, among them G. Alirol, J-C. Angelini, F. Alfonsi
2. Barcelona, General Assembly EFA, group picture
3. Poster of the 50th Anniversary of BayernPartei
1997

1 Scotland, Yes campaign for a Scottish parliament 2 YES YES campaign for more powers 3 Yes for Wales 4 Map with results of the YES vote in the Welsh referendum
San Martino di Lupari, Foundation Congresso di Liga Veneta (currently Liga Veneto Repubblica), Praesidium fltr Roccon, Morosini, Serrena, Signoroni and Mafroi Savoy, Renaissance savoisienne, among others: Winnie Ewing, Jill Evans, José-Luis Linzazasoro, Patrice Abeille, le livre blanc, Roelof Falkena, Nelly Maes and Neil Fergusson.

1998
Edinburgh, Winnie Ewing and Sean Connery, scene from Documentary, as the oldest member she was to re-convene the Scottish Parliament

2 Barcelona, ‘Aire Fresc’ (Fresh wind), ERC program for the Catalan Parliament

3 Edinburgh, Scottish parliament reconvened, members Scottish parliament

4 Cahier du Peuple Breton, ‘La Bretagne, j’y crois! Je lui donne du pouvoir, Un statut politique pour la Bretagne’
Brussels, 9 November, First Summit of EFA ministers, party leaders and members of Parliament. Presentation of EFA Declaration of Brussels. Among them: Neil MacCormick, Gorka Knörr, Jose-Luis Linazasoro, Nelly Maes, Carod Rovira and Gustave Alirol

Cardiff, Plaid Cymru Towards 2000, Programme for Wales in Europe
Cornwall, Mebyon Kernow petition campaign in support of a Cornish assembly

Strasbourg, EFA group with Gorka Knörr, Josu Ortuondo, Eurig Wynn, Carlos Bautista, Bart Staes, Jill Evans, Camilo Nogueira, Neil MacCormick, Nelly Maes and Ian Hudghton

Strasbourg, Nelly Maes returning Savoy war medals to the President of the EP, the French politician Nicole Fontaine, ‘We died for France but it is no longer our country’

Brussels, revelation of the logo and name of N-VA (Nieuw Vlaamse Alliantie) by interim president Geert Bourgeois

Brussels, EFA meeting EP, with Yves Jardin, Gorka Knörr and Ian Hudghton, Begoña Lasagabaster, Tamara Muruetagoiena, Atanasio Parisis and Patrice Abeille
1 Barcelona, EFA Conference on the Rights of Peoples in the New Europe, Nelly Maes, EFA President (1998-2010), Gorka Knörr (EA)
2 Edinburgh, SNP, The history of the Scottish National Party, Book of Peter Lynch with among them Alex Salmond, Angus Robertson and John Swinney

2002
2003

1 Brno, EFAy meeting Diversity is richness, among them EFAy President Jonas Dutordoir, EFAy coordinator Eva Mendoza and future EFAy coordinator Eva Bidania

2 Cornwall, Mebyon Kernow candidates prepare the campaign

3 Brussels, Manifestation with CHA delegation

4 Sevilla, Andalucia says: No to the war (in Iraq), Partido Andalucista

5 Brussels, Conference of EFA: ‘New impuls for Europe’s linguistic diversity’

6 Strasbourg, EFA group, MEP’s and staff and assistants

7 Aland islands, Alands Framtid presenting its candidates for the first election campaign
1-3-4 Brussels, First General Assembly of EFA as a recognized European political party, European Parliament; EFA delegations from Veneto, Trieste, Südtirol, Sardinia with Comencini, Stoka, Klotz, Piretta; Praesidium: fltr Eva Mendoza, Günther Dauwen (EFA co-directors), Nelly Maes (EFA President), Ian Hudghton (EFA Vice-President)  2. Riga, manifestation of students in favor of Russian language education
2005

1 Perpignan, Cartoon from Unitat Catalana and CDC, Septimania no existeix 2 Corsica, Days of Arritti with Fabiana Giovannini, Nelly Maes and François Alfonsi 3 Rennes, EFA General Assembly in the Regional Assembly of Bretagne, Jill Evans, Nelly Maes, Gustave Alirol and Günther Dauwen 4 Nant Gwrtheyrn, visit to Welsh language centre, Ian Hudghton, Jill Evans, and President Carl Clowes 5 Brignogan, Summer university Régions et Peuples Solidaires in Bretagne, among them Kristian Guyonvarch, Nelly Maes, Janet Davies and Yves Jardin
1 Brussels, Welsh delegation with Jill Evans, in European Parliament for 25th anniversary EFA
2 Barcelona, mass manifestation against the Madrid rejection of the new Statute, ‘We are a nation’
3 Brno, signing ceremony new party Moravana, with first President Pavel Dohnal
4 München, 60th Anniversary of Bayernpartei, speech Thomas Hummel
2007

1. Brussels, logo with poppy (peace symbol) of the new ‘Centre Maurits Coppieters’, European political Foundation connected to EFA
2. Aurich, Die Friesen banner: Social, Frisian and free
3. Bozen, sticker campaign of the newly founded Südtiroler Freiheit, South Tirol is not Italy!
1 Turgu Mures, Transylvania, Conference after entry of Laszlo Tökes in the EFA group, EFA group President Ian Hudghton and MEP Tökes
2 Edinburgh, Neil McCormick speaking to visitors of Ligue Savoisienne in Scottish Parliament
3 Cornwall, unitary? No! Cornish Assembly? Yes! Mebyon Kernow action
4 Caraglio, Football poster, Occitania versus Monaco
5 Brno, Moravana poster against Prague centralism
Brussels, investiture hearing in EFA-Greens group with Barroso on his second mandate in the European Commission, with Jill Evans. 2 Eupen, ProDG candidates elected in the regional elections. 3 EFA group with 7 members, new in the EFA group Oriol Junqueras, Frieda Brepoels and François Alfonsi. 4 Brussels, demonstration (10,000 Mil a Brusseles per l’autodeterminació) for Catalunya 28th member state in the EU. 5 Madrid, Europa de los Pueblos agreement, joint list for EP elections, Ana Miranda, Oriol Junqueras, Iñaki Irazabalbeitia, Pura Peris, Miguel Martinez, Sabin Intxaurrada
2010

1 Santiago de Compostella, mass demonstration in favor of Galician language
2 Brussels, EFA party and EFA group presidents Nelly Maes and Jill Evans meeting President of the EU Council Herman Van Rompuy
3 Perth, EFA fringe meeting ‘Talking Independence’ in SNP Conference
4 Bozen, Südtiroler Freiheit campagne on double nationality
5 Brussels, EFA group Conference on Independence, European Parliament
6 Venice, Press Conference of Nord Est, Fabrizio Comencini
7 Riga, Campaign of the party For Human rights in a united Latvia
Edinburgh, electoral tsunami in Scotland, SNP winning 69 seats and an overall majority, central Alex Salmond

Llandudno, Plaid Cymru President Jill Evans in Conference after winning the Welsh referendum for more powers

Brussels, Conference of the EFA group, ‘From Nations to Member States’

Barcelona, new ERC executive with new President Oriol Junqueras

Bilbao, election meeting of Bildu

Basque Country, Bildu Logo

Logo campaign Yes for Wales

Barcelona, end of Referendum Campaign on Independence, 10 April
Cultural & linguistic rights, self-determination, nation building & state building are central to our ideology and the EFA political action.

EFA President Eric Defoort, 2011
'Stop the world, Scotland wants to get on'

After Winnie Ewing in 1967 saying
‘Stop the world, Scotland wants to get on’
EFA works for and with its members
1 Günther Dauwen and Eva Bidania, campaign for AF (Alands Framtid), 14 April 2011, Mariehamn, Åland
2 5th Autonomy March in Silesia. 16 July 2011, Katowice
3 EFA-CMC Conference on Tax Autonomy. ltr: Danko Švorinić, Denis Pesut, Günther Dauwen, Tatjana Zdanoka, Frieda Brepoels, Dan Milosevic. 18 February 2011, Rijeka
4 EFA Group external meeting. ltr: Tatjana Zdanoka, Ian Hudghton, Jill Evans, Joan Puigcerdà, François Alfonsi, Frieda Brepoels, Oriol Junqueras, June 2011, Barcelona
5 FNP Campaign for regional election on 2 March 2011. Hendrik Ten Hoeve (left) and Douwe Bijlsma (right) 
6 Jong N-VA and N-VA protests against the illegalization of Bildu. 5 May 2011; Spanish Embassy, Brussels
7 EFA stand in the European Parliament’s Open door day. Antonia Luciani (left) and Emma Arrighi (right) 
8 'La Sovranità dei Popoli in Europa’ Conference. Flr: Marc Hendrickx, Francois Alfonsi, Eric Defoort, Giovanni Colli, Sebastian Colio, Ana Luisa Bouza. 30 April 2011, Cagliari
9 EFA and EFAy representatives in the demonstration for a Free Tibet. 6th October, 2011, Brussels

EFA General Assembly, 15th April 2011, Mariehamn, Åland
‘EFA is the Party of the emerging new states in Europe, its peoples and nations and the voice of the voiceless in the world’
EFA parties celebrating

Happy Birthday

in 2011
1 Unser Land (UL) Demonstration '2011: Création du Parlement d’Alsace 1911'. 21th of May 2011, Strasbourg
2 80th Anniversary of ERC. Flr: Anna Simó, Jordi Carbonell, Joan Puigcercós, Victor Torres, Henribert Barrera, Joan Ridao, Jordi Portabella. 19 March 2011, Barcelona
3 60th Anniversary of Mebyon Kernow (MK). Dick Cole (left) and Ann Jenkin (right). 22 January 2011, Camborne
4 25th Anniversary of CHA. 26 March 2011, Zaragoza
5 Logo of the 25th Anniversary of PSM (2001). On 12 March 2011, PSM has celebrated its 35th Anniversary in Algaida, Mallorca
6 Protest demonstration of Ligue Savoissienne (LS) on the 150th Anniversary of the annexation of Savoie to France
7 Unser Land cartoon for autonomy
8 Logo of the 25th Anniversary of Euskal Alkartasuna (EA). 18 September 2011, Lizarra
9 75th Anniversary of the Galician statute of 1936. 25 June 2011, Santiago
10 25th Anniversary of Unitat Catalana (UC). Toni Strubell, Brice Lafontaine and Anna Arqué (centre), together with UC’s board members. 3 July 2011, Perpignan
11 11th Anniversary of Lista Za Rijeku (LZR). Danko Švorinić (front) with LZR activists. 31 August 2011, Rijeka
12 90th Anniversary of Partito Sardo d’Azione (PSd’Az). 8 May 2011, Cagliari

10th Anniversary of N-VA. N-VA president Bart de Wever addressing N-VA activists. 11 September 2011, Bokrijk, Flanders
Som un nació, nosaltres decidim

‘We are a nation, we decide’
Action against the rejection of the Catalan statute 2006
1 Campaign for the referendum on more powers for the Welsh Assembly. Ieuan Wyn Jones and Jill Evans [centre], 5 March 2011, Wales.


3 Banner Partido Andalucista. Logo Autonomie Liberté Participation Ecologie (ALPE) and MRS.

4 MRS and ALPE representatives in the second summit of ‘Mont Dolent’. 26 November 2010, Vallée d’Aoste.

5 Slovenska Skupnost press conference on the abolition of the electoral act. 12 September 2011, Gorizia.

6 Omo Ilinden Pirin gathering for Yane Sandanski. 17 April 2011, Melnic.

7 SNP Conference. Winnie Ewing and Eric Defoort. 16 October 2010, Perth.

8 CMC Bureau. Fltr: Alan Sandry, Josep Vall, Günther Daufen, Xabier Macias, Miguel Martinez Tomey, Roccu Garoby. 16 September 2011, Lerin.

9 Marek Chelchowski (left), representative of Lausitzer Alliance (LA) and Jurijs Petropavlovskis (right) representative of PCTVL/FHRUL at EFA GA. 15 April 2011, Mariehamn, Aland.

Colophon

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