

2016

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The 365 days of a Presidency of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe is a particularly short period of time to try to reform the institution and to realise some of the projects that have been imagined. The year 2016 was marked by the vote in favour of Brexit. This was a shock for the whole of the European Union and particularly for the Council of European Bars and Law Societies. European lawyers immediately assured British lawyers of their confraternity.

2016 was also the high point in terms of immigration to the European Union. In order to assume our role as lawyers and therefore as legal advisors, the DAV and the Council of European Bars have joined forces to create the operation «European Lawyers in Lesvos» (ELIL). It was an immediate success, as large sums of money were donated by some Bars to finance this humanitarian initiative without the help of the States or the European institutions. Lawyers paid to provide legal assistance to migrants. Many lawyers, coming from all over Europe, volunteered to leave their families, their offices and their comforts for a minimum of two weeks to go and live in Lesbos and give daily consultations to help migrants build up their files in order to obtain the right of asylum.

In 2017, I visited the Lesbos camp and the contacts with the lawyers present were, for me, a moving and important moment.

This ongoing operation demonstrates that the law is an essential component of humanitarian aid. No operation of this nature should exist without the active presence of lawyers. The Council of European Bars and Law Societies, together with other lawyers' organisations, could take this idea forward.

Finally, the European Bar Council has resolutely turned its attention to new technologies and the future of lawyers, on the one hand within the committees devoted to these topics (new technologies and the future of the profession) but above all by organising a colloquium in Paris in October 2016 to address all the issues related to this digital revolution and the way in which lawyers can approach it. Lawyers from various continents were present and worked together during this day. It was a comfort to see the modernity of our profession. Many were sceptical about the success of such a conference. However, when the European Bar Council, with its team of competent permanent staff, experts, committee members and members of the presidency is mobilised, success is assured. The e-book that has been produced from this event demonstrates the quality of the interventions and debates.

The Council of European Bars is therefore in good shape. Sixty is certainly a respectable age, but it does not detract in any way from its dynamism, its willingness to serve lawyers and its futuristic vision of our profession. Thus, as Jean-Jaurès, a French politician, used to say: «We must have no regrets for the past, no remorse for the present, and an unshakeable confidence in the future».

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