

Editorial

Thank you and farewell: *'Il n'y a pas de métier plus difficile que celui de bien remercier'*

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This review was founded 15 years ago, in 1992, on a wave of Europtimism that was fully justified at the time. Since the signature of the Single Act in 1986 a long train of directives and regulations gradually had been liberating the European Market in all its aspects, resulting in the most spectacular and visible aspect on 1 January 1993 of the abolition of all border controls inside Europe. There was a vigorous Community of 12 members and even in the difficult area of taxation there was progress with the Dividend and the Merger Directive, the Ruding Report and the Arbitration Convention on transfer pricing.

Since then the European environment has changed considerably. Although several candidates did not meet the minimal economic criteria, the European Union has expanded for political reasons into Central and Eastern Europe, making Russia the country with the longest land border with the EU. Today some would like to have a further expansion even beyond Europe's geographical borders so as to make Europe lose its identity and become a generic free customs zone. In the mean time Islam has manifested itself as a challenge but also as a threat inside Europe and at its eastern and southern borders. The alliance with the US has changed in nature. Until 1989 the US was the protector of Western Europe and policy priorities vis à vis communist regimes in Moscow and Beijing were very close if not identical. Today the large majority of the EU Member States and the US have different views on how to deal with rising Islam and how to look for a lasting peace in the Middle East. Inside Europe however, and except for the expansion, things have hardly moved. The great debate on the constitutional reform ended in the defeat of the Constitution and resulted in a minimal reform just to keep things moving at glacial speed.

Contrary to the general perception, things have moved considerably in the field of taxation: a new codification of VAT has been achieved, the European Court of Justice has completely reshaped the landscape of cross-border taxation, unfair tax competition has been challenged and new directives on cross-border interest and royalties have been approved and the old directives on dividends and mergers have been

refurbished. Therefore it has been an exciting time to run this journal. The stream of contributions increases every year, as witnessed by the increase in the frequency of the review in 2007. Thanks to the foundation of the European Association of Tax law Professors, which organizes every year a congress on a subject of interest to scholars of European taxation, a real debate has flourished on which direction European taxation should go. This journal has positioned itself as the place where this debate could be conducted in all openness and fairness without any prejudice or preconception, because it adheres to the proposition: *'Du choc des idées jaillit la lumière'*. Confrontation of ideas, apart from providing heat to the debate, also very often sheds light on our problems. These were golden years for me as a scholar, because through the journal I had the privilege of meeting countless outstanding colleagues as authors, debaters, advisors, researchers and also as friends. The team of the editorial board has grown into a close tax family and we all have evolved into a community of scholars and researchers who meet regularly at reunions at which new ideas and new theses are launched and exchanged.

All this now comes to an end for me at least within the framework of this review. The new position which I have accepted as Academic Chairman of the International Bureau of Fiscal Documentation is incompatible with the position of Chairman of the Editorial Board of the *EC Tax Review*, which I have been holding since the start - more than 15 years. At the IBFD I cannot avoid being closely involved in two journals, one of which is a direct competitor (*European Taxation*) and the other an indirect competitor (*The Bulletin for International Taxation*). This situation is not only uncomfortable, it is fraught with conflict of interest issues and guarantees that I would lose my good friends in the editorial board at best and turn them into implacable enemies at worst. I had rather be honest and keep them as friends. Therefore I will step down as Chairman of the Editorial Board of the *EC Tax Review* and leave the editorial board altogether. At the same time Professor Dr. Leo Stevens will also leave the Editorial Board. He was one of the co-founders of the

review, a loyal but enthusiastic wayfarer in good and in bad times. He has been our 'liaison officer' with the publisher, which proved to be an invaluable function in times of crisis. I have always considered him to be the real founder of the review. We became such close friends that we decided that we would retire together from the review.

This is my final editorial. As a scholar I certainly still hope to publish in this review in the future, as I have published in competing reviews, but giving direction to the review will be left to others whom I totally trust.

I thank you all, the members of the editorial board and the correspondents, the authors and commentators for making the review over the years into what it is today and you readers and sympathizers for giving your generous support to the review. The French author Gilles Ménage wrote in the seventeenth century: *'Il n'y a pas de métier plus difficile que celui de bien remercier'*, but you all have contributed to make it very easy for me to be very, very thankful for this unique experience in a beautiful adventure.