

## Speech given by Régis Ritz

Distinguished guests,  
Dear Wolfgang,

First of all I am very pleased to bring you EUA's best wishes and congratulations. I was recently exchanging emails with Lesley Wilson and Andrée Sursock and they were so happy to learn that your university and your TNP close friends and colleagues would celebrate in the most appropriate way your 40 years of solid and efficient work at Freie Universität Berlin.

The European University Association has become now a major partner for ELC/CEL; with a membership of over 600 universities across Europe, EUA represents the best forum for disseminating the Thematic Networks results and recommendations and for developing new programmes. CEL/ECL has opened an office in the Brussels EUA building; it is placed under your leadership and it clearly represents your excellent European strategy.

I wish now to add my personal compliments and congratulations.

As a member of Wolfgang's gang I think I am entitled to reveal some of your prominent qualities and it is a pleasure to do so in front of all the friends present here who have been working, hard and loyally by your side, on the many programmes and thematic networks you have personally and successfully launched.

How does one become a member of Wolfgang's gang?

My answer is simple: three conditions are required.

The first condition is that you must hear Wolfgang declare solemnly to you: "My dear friend, you are a man/woman after my heart!" This sentence is generally pronounced loudly in public; you are then knighted, this is the *dignus entrare*; you are a member of the gang. It may sound somewhat sentimental; I rather think it is a perfect example of the German romantic soul and as such one important aspect of Wolfgang's personality.

The second condition is that now you are on Wolfgang's official e-mailing list; you will then receive loads of documents, reports, executive summaries, power-point presentations of conferences on languages, meeting agendas, etc... Pages and pages written in purple English, immensely helpful to prepare your work and your mission in the team/gang. At the same time you are imperatively invited to read and study these e-documents before the next meeting; this mark of authority is easily accepted as we all know that Wolfgang has Prussian roots.

The third condition; you know you are definitely one of the gang when you begin to receive Wolfgang's private e-mails. The tone and contents are radically different from the previous official ones. Here are some quotes of Wolfgang's style taken from our recent exchanges:

- I work round the clock; can't answer you now; will get in touch asap.
- I am completely tied up all day, will ring you to-morrow morning.
- Yours under extreme pressure, W.M. (Note: one wonders if the two initials are personal or stand for W.ork M.ore...)
- I have much too much on my plate! (Note: not to be taken literally as Wolfgang hardly eats anything but tomatoes and mozzarella...)
- I am snowed under; I have absolutely no time now! (Note: again not to be taken literally as this message was sent from Faro in the south of Portugal...)

Do not be mistaken: Wolfgang is not complaining, but simply celebrating work and his love of work, good, efficient work, real work, excellent work.

The gang members know perfectly their leader: a romantic, charismatic, authoritative, hard working Prusso-German.

But to be complete this portrait needs another trait: music. Wolfgang is a true music lover, ready to share his musical treasures generously – historical collection of Die Philharmonie concerts – with the whole gang. Quel bonheur et quelle musique magnifique!

Indeed we all love Wolfgang's music and, in the name of the gang of friends, I can declare loudly and in public: **Wolfgang, you are a man after our hearts!**

Régis Ritz  
Berlin, 2 may 2008