



Bent Jespersen

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To: Lions Clubs International, Executive Officers and Members of the Board of Directors

From: Bent Jespersen, International Director 2019-2022
Board Appointee to Europa Forum 2021

Ref: Final report from the 66th Europa Forum 2021 in Thessaloniki, Greece (CA IV)

I was honored to represent the Executive Officers and Board of Directors as their Board Liaison in the Europa Forum held in Thessaloniki Greece, 7-9 October 2021. Sovereign United Europa - Precondition for World Peace - was the theme of this Forum, and 97 various topics and program items were on the agenda for the 3 days.

The Forum was planned to be hold in October 2020 and in January 2020 we had the first meeting in the Supervisory Committee. But the spread of the global pandemic changed everything in March. It was decided to cancel the Forum and postponed it for one year. The Forum for coming years in Croatia and Austria agreed in postponing their forums one year. Since then, I have been working closely with the Committee and all the Members of the Host Committee virtual. Due to the engagement of the host committee with PID George Papas as chairman and the many volunteers, it ended up with a memorable Forum.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, The Executive Board and Staff from Oak Brook did not have the opportunity to participate and seen compared to the most recent Forum in 2019 in Tallinn, the number of participants was also somewhat lower. But 625 participants were registered. As there was still one participant who either did not want to travel due to insecurity or who due to lack of vaccinations could not come, it was decided that parts of the program were implemented as a hybrid version, so registration was opened for this, and several Lions took up this initiative.

Absence of Executive Boards members was resolved with either video recordings or live streaming, and absence of staff was resolved by dedicated Lions in Europe taking over presentations and caring for the booths.

Thursday morning started with three keynote speakers each presentation a sub theme. The first Common European health standard, focusing on Pediatric cancer was delivered of Mr. Vasilis Kikilias, Minister of Tourism and ex-minister of Health. Then

Lions Sophia Voultepsi, Deputy Minister of Immigration and Sanctuary talked about Refugee influx. Rapidly changing the image of Europe. Finally, Margaritis Schinas, EU Vice President for promoting European Way of Live talked about Uniform Management of climate changes. All very interesting and illustration our challenges. The day continued with many workshops and seminar, just mentioning LCIF, Campaign100, Lions Quest and a session “Meet your International President” – conducted as mentioned with a video. PIP Gudrun Yngvadottir was present and able to elaborate and helping me answering the questions that participants had. The more formal part was our European Council with approval of Minutes from last forum and report as well as presentation of Resolutions.

The day ended with a very festive opening with flag parade, speech by the city mayor, the regional governor and a representative of the Prime Minister as well as musical entertainment.

Friday continued with workshops and seminars covering a lot of topics, but also the possibility for DGs to see the message from IP Douglas X Alexander and for first vice district governors to have a chat with first VP Brian Sheehan. GAT team having their session and another session about our new initiative in CA IV of a LCIF Day in June. The day was concluded with Macedonian Night showing Greek hospitality and dance performance.

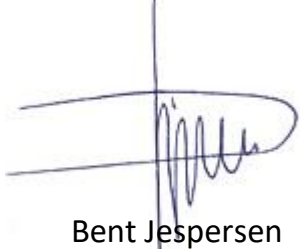
Last day Saturday was covering seminars about membership growth including presentation of NAMI and implementation of the program in other constitutional areas. Lions and our work with The United Nation as another example, LCIF – Our Foundation. Our Impact was title of another seminar and finally also the Council of Europe final meeting voting for the different resolutions among one deciding that Forum 2024 will be in Bordeaux, France. The days last official part of the program was Closing Ceremony presenting winner of The Thomas Kuti Music Competition and winner of Bert Mason Young Ambassador and finally handing over the Forum Flag to Croatia hosting the next forum. More informal – but a festive end of 3 days was the Gala Dinner with entertainment and dancing.

During all days The Thomas Kuti Music Competition - a music prize is awarded annually at the Lions Europa Forum to encourage talented young European musicians - this year with saxophone as instrument, was completed. Bert Mason Young Ambassador was the other main competitions taking place during the annual Europa Forum. The aim of the Young Ambassador award is twofold: To recognize, encourage and support young people who are actively involved in the welfare of the community and to raise the profile of Lions and increase our own service activities. It is very impressive to follow the young people's commitment and it gives the forum another dimension.

My conclusion is that we all have had fruitful days and could say to each other “this was indeed a memorable forum”, and that we all now can go back and serve as the IP Douglas has stated:

“We serve with love and compassion in communities around the world. The selfless giving of our time and effort is precisely what makes Lions so special. When we give, we expect nothing in return. Yet we gain so much. Our service offers hope and connection in the face of great need and extends an invitation to the world to join us. We embrace the joy that comes with Service from The Heart.”

Yours in Service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bent Jespersen', with a large, sweeping horizontal stroke above the name.

Bent Jespersen
International Director 2019-2022