

# EP Newshound

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Events &amp; People

## It's school party time!

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The EAS celebrates its 5th birthday



EAS, the European Administration

School, celebrated its 5th birthday on 25 June last in the 'de Gasperi' room in the Charlemagne building in Brussels.

"Yeah, right!", we hear you say, "Loads of soothing speeches, mutual back-slapping, tired statements of the obvious about 'issues' and 'challenges'."

That's where you're wrong! To be fair, though, I can't actually guarantee that no speaker used the above-mentioned words, which have the distinct tendency of making what is left of my hair stand on end (no mean feat!). Yet, in all honesty, utterances of that kind were kept to a minimum. Otherwise I wouldn't be mentioning it .

David Walker, Director of the School and master communicator, had at least two good ideas:

- One, inviting as keynote speaker Alain Hubert, Antarctic explorer and founder-President of the International Polar Foundation (pretty cool);
- Two, organising a fun quiz on little things in European history: a change from that air of solemnity which all too often - in the European institutions - passes for the real thing...

**When Paul-Henri Spaak sang 'O Sole Mio' at night in his hotel**



We thus learned a few interesting pieces of trivia, for example:

- Paul-Henri Spaak got bawled out in his hotel by French foreign minister Antoine Pinay (who hadn't identified the singer) on the night after the last-ditch conclusion of the Messina Agreement: he couldn't sleep for Spaak warbling *O Sole Mio* at the top of his voice;
- The dignitaries signing the Treaty of Rome signed ... blank pages: the roneotyped sheets which the exhausted officials had left in a room spread out on the floor, intending to collate them next morning, had quite properly been binned by the cleaners.

#### **A Jean Monnet Polar Research Centre?**

I have to confess to a momentary shiver of fear.

Listening to Alain Hubert talking about his famous revolutionary Polar Research Station in front of all the training supremos from the European institutions, our own included, I reflected coolly on whether we were about to send off the EP's top management to the South Pole, to follow a training at a Jean Monnet Polar House, where they would face conditions even more extreme than those governing the award of merit points.

Info duly noted, but a decision has not yet been reached...

After that moment of alarm, I listened to the speech delivered by the School's boss and host David Walker. It was a brief but stirring speech celebrating the accessibility, commitment, enthusiasm and service-minded attitude of his team. The little I know about them so far confirms that they're a nice bunch.

#### **From EEAS to EAS**

The closing words - and the signal for lunch, since it was coming up to 1 o'clock - were delivered by Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, sometimes known as 'the smiling Slovak' (his own words). He mentioned, in no particular order:

- EEAS, the EU's diplomatic service, and his satisfaction with the interinstitutional consensus reached at Madrid;
- The need to prove the added value of European officials in the tricky context of a possible revision of the method for setting salary scales;
- The fact that executives were getting older and the need to interest final-year university students in careers with the European civil service;
- EPSO's success in shortening the time it took to recruit people (in these troubled times EPSO may have found some comfort in that);
- The wish to see the EAS organise potentially "compulsory" training for national civil servants.

At that point the assembled company headed for the buffet.

The sandwiches were delicious.

Alain Hubert headed straight for the ice cream...

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