



College of Europe  
Collège d'Europe



Natolin

**To the members of the board of governors**

**To the teaching staff of the College of Europe**

**To all other personnel of the College of Europe**

Dear Colleagues,

Dear Friends,

Dear former students of Professor Picht,

It is my sad duty to inform you that our colleague Robert Picht, a former rector of the College, a former vice-rector at Natolin and currently the director of the general studies programme, passed away last Wednesday, as a result of an illness which he had known for some time would prove fatal, but which he faced with great courage and with typical lucidity. Right until the very final days, he continued, with the help of his assistant Luis Bouza, to ensure the smooth and efficient running of the programme for which he was responsible. Having had the opportunity to speak with him quite recently, I can state unequivocally that his spirit was still looking towards the future and that he was concerned, as always, to make a positive contribution towards the academic development of our College. We had all hoped that if his illness could not be conquered, it could at least be contained. Sadly, it was not to be.

It was in 1987 - when he was appointed as a lecturer for the European Sociology course within the wider programme for European inter-disciplinary studies at Bruges, the programme which would later become the general studies programme – that the paths of Robert Picht and the College of Europe first crossed. Thereafter, they were destined never to be separated. The College later asked him to become director of this programme, and it was under his impulse that it blossomed and grew. He was assisted in his task by his extensive knowledge of European cultures, his sense of history, his interest in philosophy and his belief in trans-national cooperation. One of his most remarkable contributions was to establish a co-operative relationship between Arte, the College and his students.

Apart from his obvious identification with the general studies programme, in his time Robert Picht also occupied two other important positions, as a result of which the College rightly owes him a huge debt of gratitude. From June 2002 until January 2003, he agreed to assume the tasks of the rector on an interim basis, during the interval between the untimely death of rector Piet Akkermans and the appointment of a new incumbent.

Later, between 2004 and 2007 – and without even being a candidate for the job – he similarly agreed to fill the vice-rector's post at the College in Natolin. During his time in Poland he made a major contribution towards the further development of the content of the academic programme. This programme had previously been centred on the preparations for European enlargement, but he shifted the focus towards a more pluri-disciplinary study of the processes of European integration. As was the case with his period as rector *ad interim*, he also occupied the vice-rector's position at Natolin with competence, elegance and charm: qualities which were so typical of the man.

Robert Picht studied French, philosophy and sociology in Fribourg, Munich, Madrid, Hamburg and Paris. He obtained his doctorate in sociology at the Sorbonne under the direction of Pierre Bourdieu. This true Francophile later went on to teach German and German politics at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques and the ENA. Between 1972 and 2000, he was director of the Franco-German Institute at Ludwigsbourg. He was also a visiting professor at the universities of Bologna, Dartmouth, Hagen, Lille, Paris-Asnières and Stuttgart. In addition, he was an administrator of the European Cultural Foundation and since the year 2000 had served as president of the Advisory Council of the Allianz Kulturstiftung.

His many publications were largely devoted to France, Franco-German relations and Europe. He recently co-edited 'Visions of Europe' with the late lamented Professor Bronislaw Geremek.

The sad passing of Robert Picht will make the College of Europe a poorer place, both in human and intellectual terms. The College bows its head in honour of the memory of a fine colleague and offers its deepest sympathy to his wife and children.

Paul Demaret