

REFLECTING ON THE PAST: ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

SPEECH BY Pilvi Torsti, ETF Director

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Evening event for the ETF 30th anniversary at Venaria Reale

[Check against delivery]

“My dear people. Dear ETF staff with their partners, dear day-to-day personnel who make our coffees in VG and keep our environment safe and clean, dear former ETF colleagues, dear governing board members, dear partner country representatives, dear Torino community, dear EU family members, dear students of UWCAD and the young European Ambassadors coming from the countries where we work.

As you can see, tonight everybody is here. Tonight our photographer is not with the camera and our ETF bar-tender is not behind the coffee machine. Tonight everybody is here to celebrate for this celebration belongs to all of us.

I want to thank many of you who travelled far and decided to be here tonight. We know these are busy end-of-year week, we know a lot is happening. You made a commitment. Thank you.

And I want to thank you the amazing ETF team which has done all this work. Someone could think we are professional event organisation not a relatively small expert organisation!

Tonight is more than a celebration — We are here to reflect the 30-year journey of the European Training Foundation — a journey defined by resilience, innovation, and the belief in the match between job market and education as the most powerful tool for change.

How to celebrate and mark the 30th anniversary? We asked that question at the ETF. Is it overall ok to celebrate taken the problems and conflicts in many countries where we work? Should we simply have coffee and cake in house and check the box when more than 2/3 of staff have participated?



We decided differently. We wanted to bring people together, as that is the way we work.

We also did this recognising the lesson of COVID in the part of the world – we really appreciate being together, being brought together.

This morning we looked 30 years into the future, and summarised a full year of future and foresight work with amazing contribution from our friends. We concluded education and training is our lighthouse and guidance, ever more important as a uniting force in these complex times. Follow our channels to stay tuned for the conclusions of work. They will directly and practically inform the upcoming ETF strategy and EU financial cycle – both to be decided in the next two years.

And we – of course decided to celebrate in the spirit of our city – from Torino with love.

We celebrate and thank you all for your contribution. For 30 years, the ETF has been a force for transformation. We've supported communities through transitions — from the post-Cold War era to the present day. We've worked in fragile contexts, from Ukraine to Palestine to Lebanon, through the Arab Spring ensuring education and training continues to serve as a source of resilience and hope.

And we've responded to the challenges of our time — migration, the climate crisis, and technological change — with creativity, collaboration, and the conviction that education is the most efficient way to change the world.

At 30, the ETF is at its prime age. At prime age we are experienced enough to know our strengths and courageous enough to embrace the future with ambition and energy.

At our prime age I could not be more proud of us. It is an honour for me to stand before you in this room filled – we are more than 400 - with such devoted people – dear colleagues, changemakers, partners, and innovators who have been and will be part of the European Training Foundation's journey taking us into 2054 and beyond. From Torino with love.

Dear friends,

As I did not manage a good joke I will close with a serious book I am reading. The book tries to capture what are ingredients of special moments we have in life, ingredients of special moments in professional and personal lives when something important, something magic, something larger than life happens.

The book concludes listing three ingredients for such moments: being present, being agenda-free and being on a high frequency.

I believe with all of us in this same room tonight we have a good chance for special, magic moments, to take place. We are present, we are agenda-free, we can be on high frequency.

Such magic moments will carry our work in the complex world which requires from all of us strength, commitment and realistic but stubborn optimism.

Be most welcome. Thank you."