

**NOTES ON THE MISSION OF THE EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF
NATIONAL ENGINEERING ASSOCIATIONS
– FEANI -**

As the world experiences a huge magnitude of changes that are occurring at an increasingly progressive rate, this not only affects the way that people live, but requires them to reinvent many areas of their life, which in turn has an overall impact on economic and **professional** activity, and on businesses and industry in particular.

In the case of the European Federation of National Engineering Associations- FEANI- which has been in existence for over 60 years, it also applies the same criteria of reinventing, or at least **reevaluating its role and mission.**

The first seeds for the creation of the European Federation of National Engineering Associations were sown at the International Lake Constance Conference in Germany, in **June of 1949**, where the central theme was: “**The Role of Engineers in Modern Society**”, and the main resolution adopted was to “**jointly pursue the work already begun by establishing an international organization, temporarily limited to Europe, which would aim to strengthen the presence of engineers in every economic and social facet, both nationally and internationally.**” The conference was attended by 350 European engineers.

FEANI was later created in Luxembourg, in September of 1951. It was founded by seven European engineering associations: Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, France, Italy and Luxembourg.

Beyond corporate initiatives, we can see that in the very forefront of its foundation, FEANI reflects the principles of commitment, participation, recognition and mobility, **with a clear vocation of service to the European cause.**

The establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), considered to be the "seed" of the current European Union (EU), established by the Treaty of Paris on April 18, 1951, and signed by Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands- practically the same countries- **had been anticipated with a strong sense of its mission, a breadth of vision and in looking towards the future.**

Currently, there are 30 European countries and 100 engineering associations represented in FEANI, each recognized in their respective countries as representatives

of engineering on a national level. It is the most important engineering association in the world, representing more than two million engineers on the continent, and is **officially recognized by the European Commission as a representative of engineering professionals throughout Europe.**

The main idiosyncrasy of the FEANI is that it has become more academically oriented in nature, as opposed to that of a professional and business orientation, and its representative character needs to be updated to reflect the multicultural and multidisciplinary nature of the engineers in Europe, which includes: **engineers whose work is in academia, or for the government, or who are entrepreneurs or executives, or industrial engineers, information and communications engineers, or engineers who work in the field of services, energy, transportation, or the environment, to name a few.**

FEANI has an obligation to provide leadership, **of course by representing the opinion of European engineers, but to do so while also serving the European society.** That is, because Europe is an open, pluralistic and democratic society, there is no question that the role and the future of the organization lie in benefiting what is in the general interest of Europe and in engaging itself to strengthen its civil society.

It is clear that Europe needs to have a stronger voice in the international community, especially at this exciting time and amidst such uncertainty- a time in which the focus of Western relations may be shifting toward the Pacific, due to U.S. supremacy and the importance of Japan and Korea. Therefore, **it is absolutely necessary for Europe to play more of a leadership role, and one in which its professional organizations should also contribute as an essential part of its civil society.**

In the year 2000, as Europe was immersed in change, the European Council of Lisbon agreed on a new strategic goal for the European Union in order to implement **a knowledge-based economy that ended up becoming the most competitive and dynamic in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, and with more and better jobs, as well as greater social cohesion.**

In order to achieve this goal, a strategic framework was established, which includes measures such as:

- Preparing for the transition to **a knowledge-based economy and society by improving the information society and R & D**, paving the way towards a European research area, and being prepared to undertake the appropriate structural reform so as **to favor innovation and competitiveness**.
- Given that Europe's greatest asset is its people, an investment in human capital is considered essential in order for Europe to play an important role in this **knowledge-based economy**.
- One year prior, in July 1999, the **Bologna Declaration** was signed as a major step forward in achieving this new economic approach, which has been previously described.

At the last meeting of the ministers of the countries participating in the Bologna Process held in May 2007 in London, it was said that the advances in recent years have brought us significantly closer to the European Higher Education Area- EHEA.

- Also reaffirmed during the meeting was the commitment to create and maintain **an advanced knowledge base and to promote research and innovation**.

As for aspects regarding **mobility, that corresponding to professionals, students and graduates is a central part of the process**. However, we are aware that there are some obstacles that stand in way of achieving the objective of mobility- the recognition of degrees and diplomas being one of them. Each country agrees to work towards implementing procedures for recognizing such degrees and to study ways of encouraging such **mobility**.

The concepts of a knowledge-based society, a society based on information, technology, innovation and sustainable economic activity, are concepts that, as we have witnessed, became increasingly commonplace in Europe in the late 1990's; they now constitute the Grail of the business-economic and industrial world, and are concepts that are very familiar to engineers. Therefore, their organizations must require the active participation of public authorities in order to benefit European society as well as **the societies of each country**. Furthermore, the

issue of mobility has been one of the major objectives of FEANI, since it was first created.

Indeed, thanks to information technologies, **Europe has been able to establish the information and knowledge-based society that it seeks**, thereby making it possible that as **science progresses toward creating technology through engineering, and there is an increased market for technology involving engineering, we are lead towards innovation, which is the industry of today.**

In this sense, industrialized countries are in a better position to create value, whereas non-industrialized countries can create wealth, but have a difficult time creating value. Value is more robust, because it is long-lasting. **Value is the ticket to the future, just as it has been in the past and is today.**

In this manner, the concept of **Science / Technology / Innovation ⇒ Company shapes the core of the knowledge-based economy; and that of creating an efficient knowledge/industry relationship presents a challenge for European countries, and consequently for Europe as a whole.**

As we have said before and would like to reiterate here, the world and the work of engineers are based on these concepts and on their development; therefore, with regard to such important matters, the public authorities should consider the opinion of qualified engineers.

The mission of FEANI

- a) We already know how FEANI currently operates, and it is necessary to move forward from this point in order to define the **organization that it wants to become.**

In this regard, it must represent the main aspects of the world of engineering. It must also become a voice of renowned authority, and consequently, at least an advisory institution regarding the topics of:

- **Recognition, empowerment and job mobility** - the Eng-Card is a valuable tool and should not be abandoned, but it is not enough.

- **Information Society and R&D**
 - **Business and industry:** competitiveness and innovation
 - **Knowledge-based society:** Research, industry, energy, telecommunications, mining, transportation, sustainable development, corporate social responsibility, economics, finance, infrastructure, climate change, etc.
- b) FEANI has to **recover the original and creative instincts it had when it was first created**, and its status enables it to do so since it is an organization that is clearly distinctive in comparison with other organizations that are more or less similar.
- c) **FEANI must have the resources necessary** that would enable it to continuously carry out evaluations of its activities, and it must **reevaluate its organization** by defining new organizational committees that include prestigious experts. Finally, it must also redefine the existing committees, if necessary.

In conclusion, **FEANI must be closer to the engineers, to the fields where they work, to the future of industry and economics**, and not just in areas such as mobility and professional qualification, which in practice, has been its primary mission since its foundation.

Due to its high qualification and leveraging position, FEANI must get involved and be heard in advanced training, in research, business, industry and the economy, and it must regularly produce papers and reports that truly are of interest to engineers, public authorities and European society.

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