



**Closing speech by the newly elected Chair, Charo Fernando, (AUTOCONTROL/Spain) at the EASA General Assembly - 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2020**

Dear colleagues, *dear friends*,

Thank you very much for placing your trust in AUTOCONTROL and in me to chair EASA.

Having devoted almost all my professional career to advertising self-regulation, it is a great honour to assume this mandate. And it is because today, more than ever, advertising self-regulation matters and has an important role to play to help companies to develop and comply with advertising standards. Standards that – *as I try to explain to my children, Daniel and María, when they ask me about my job*- ultimately contribute to make Europe and the world a more fair, safe and sustainable place to live in, for us and for future generations.

I'm sure I speak on behalf of the Officers elected, Angela, Orla and Conor, in saying that we'll do our best for the forthcoming months to help this great family that is EASA to pursue its mission of promoting responsible advertising across Europe.

First of all, I would like to place on record our thanks and admiration for the amazing job that Stéphane Martin (ARPP, France) has done chairing EASA the last four years, together with the team of Officers: Stephan Loerke, Mathilde and myself. It was my privilege to see it from the first row and to learn from all of you during these years. We all thank you for your contribution, your time, effort and commitment with EASA.

Stéphane, many achievements during your mandate deserve to be highlighted. I would like to enhance two of them. The first, which connects with the past, has been to keep alive the best legacy of EASA, carrying out a transition in which their foundational and guiding principles and its 25 years' experience and knowledge, have been perfectly transmitted to the new team. The second, and huge achievement: Google's EASA membership, connects with the future.

Let me talk you about the future. The sustainability and success of EASA and the SROs in the future requires us to be able to understand the changes that advertising is currently undergoing through.

First, of course, **advertising technological and digital developments**. We all have to follow these developments and make sure that the new actors join EASA. Industry needs to adapt their traditional advertising standards to cover these new issues. And for their part, SROs need to adapt their services -or establish new ones- to address new industry requirements. In parallel, we should explore how to benefit from these tech developments, for example, through the implementation of new tools, like AI or machine learning.

Second, we are facing a **connected and empowered consumer** who increasingly demands responsibility from companies and advertising. A responsibility that goes beyond strict

regulatory compliance and requires them to contribute to changes in aspects like minors' protection, sustainability, diversity and inclusion, transparency or privacy. To stay relevant, SR has to be able to continue helping companies to respond to these new consumers' requirements, by adapting their codes of conduct and practices accordingly.

And third, **globalization**. Globalization that doesn't go just in one direction, because, paradoxically, in an increasingly globalised and connected world, the local becomes more and more important as a response to that globalisation. We must therefore, together with ICAS, work in the SR **harmonised developments** that large companies demand of us, but at the same time **preserve the value and effectiveness of local self-regulation**.

And we must face all these challenges, ensuring that the solutions we implement do not further widen the gap between **large and small European SROs**. On the contrary, we must make a special effort in the coming months to **reduce this gap**.

I think all these challenges have been reflected in EASA's strategy for the coming years and we are already working on them.

Finally, as if these challenges were not complicated enough, we must work in the complex scenario of the COVID pandemic. But, as Don Quixote said to his squire, Sancho, in the most famous Spanish literary work: "*All these storms that are happening to us are signs that time will soon be calm and good things will happen; because it is not possible that evil or good can last, and consequently, having lasted evil long enough, good must already be near*". I pray for that.

It is with this positive attitude –*and trying not to think about how much we would be enjoying Barcelona*– that we assume our mandate ready to face these challenging times and to help EASA's Secretariat. A great team perfectly led by Lucas.

Lucas, Justina, Orestis, Matej, Estere, Delphine and Tudor we are very lucky to have you. Congratulations and huge thanks for your daily job. Without it any of our recent achievements or our future projects would be possible. We will continue working to strengthen you as a Secretariat and to ensure that EASA remains an optimal place for your career development. I am looking forward very much to working closer with you the next months.

Ildiko (Fazekas, ORT, Hungary) gave us reference to getting us all working together in a choir, Guy (Parker, ASA, UK) talked ensuring that the choir sings in harmony. Stéphane Martin added that for him, he would like, as a quartet to ensure that we continue the strong melody of the reason why we are together. On my side, I would like, building on this legacy, help to enrich the choir with new voices that help us to play new melodies for new times. *Ambitious, I know, but I always tell my children to dream big!*

Thanks to all of you!