



## **President's Report, AGM, Wednesday May 20, 2020** (deferred from Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 due to virus lock-down)

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Business around the whole world has been impacted by the global measures to restrict the spread of the Covid19 virus. EU has been the hardest hit area and no-one has escaped the effects on business and personal lives. In New Zealand we had to defer our meeting scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> April and are now able to have the meeting on 20 May, 2020. All countries are now busy trying to soften the impact on business and employment.

During the year past the NZEBC has had three scheduled meetings. In addition, there has been a number of meetings by part of the committee and with members in connection with visits from Brussels and European member countries. I have met up with the Treasurer, Monique Surges regularly as well as attended various meetings with EU representatives together with our NZEBC members. In-between meetings there have been frequent email exchanges with and between members, including cross-information on upcoming events. I have regularly copied NZEBC on EU matters, Trade and Brexit issues as these are topical and will impact us all.

### Publicity

In November 2018 we started a co-operation with Employers and Manufacturers Association (EMA) to profile all EU members one by one in their monthly magazine Business Plus. The publication of national contributions by our member countries has continued through 2019 and are still going. It is expected that all member countries will have had their promotional story published before the end of the current year. Our co-operation with EMA has been very useful and should continue even when the current series of articles is complete.

### Events.

In February of 2020 we had an event introducing the New Ambassador to the EU Delegation in New Zealand, H.E. Nina Obermeier. This event drew 80 participants and was very well received. The ambassador's presentation was preceded by a NZEBC board meeting and followed by a networking opportunity.

The Polish Business Association arranged a function commemorating the 15 years anniversary of the EU membership extension function on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2019 at Europe House. It was well organized and very well patronized and received

The 26<sup>th</sup> of July, Business Europe hosted a breakfast event in Auckland with 25 participants. It was an interesting and informative meeting.

On 26<sup>th</sup> August the Slovak Ambassador H.E. Tomas Ferko, based in Canberra, gave a very interesting presentation at The Institute for International Affairs. The Institute also hosted the EU Ambassador, H.E. Bernard Savage as a speaker on 16<sup>th</sup> September. His speech was very well received.

The 20<sup>th</sup> of September the annual October Fest took place organized by the **German NZ Chamber of Commerce** attracting over 500 attendees. The 10<sup>th</sup> of October the French organized a gala dinner to celebrate 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the French Chamber of Commerce in NZ. Other than these major events our members organized a number of events, with invitations also to other countries. Most Europe-related events are of course run by our member business organizations from Britain, Germany, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Scandinavia and many other of the EU member nations' trade promoters. Adding it all together, membership events, including those of cultural and social nature, do occur on an almost weekly basis throughout the year. The impact of the Covid19 virus may well impact on the number of events in the immediate future but video link meeting are happening in the meantime.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade have had several information sessions relating to the progress of the NZ – EU FTA negotiations, also post the lock-down this year.

#### Finances & Membership

Our financial position is strong with net assets at year-end 2019 of \$ 10,994.37, an increase of \$ 1,729.32 the previous year.

14 Associate members paid

24 Full members paid

We believe there is no need to increase membership fees as the NZEBC is presently covering its expenditure with strict cost control, running events on a cost recovery basis. The majority of work done in our organization is pro bono by the president, vice president and treasurer.

Total contacts in the database stands at 54 (for some organizations we have two contacts noted).

#### EBO Conference in Brussels 17 – 19 June and in Tokyo 2-4 December 2019

I attended last year's EBO conference in Brussels in June. As always, this was a very interesting conference against the backdrop of the recent EU Parliament elections and the imminent appointment of new leadership for EU. Hot topics included Brexit, Trade relations with China and Iran, the new focus on Climate Change and Africa as well as the general challenge to International Trade from the US administration.

The second conference was in Tokyo early December. These conferences are partially sponsored by DG Grow of EU in Brussels who contribute travel and some contribution towards accommodation and per diems. Common for all of EBO entities is that they are locally funded and not an organizational part of the EU. EBO's now count 40 members and keep growing further, especially in Africa. The fee we pay for membership is Euro 200 per year. This year a new Chair was elected, Jason Collins, CEO of the European Australian Business Council.

Full report on both these conferences are available on request.

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## Looking forward

The NZ Europe FTA remains our top focus. World Trade is currently challenged, in the short term mainly by the reactions to Covid19 virus and more long-term by tensions between three major trading blocks, and a perception that benefits from trade and unregulated markets are not reaching all citizens. The NZ -EU FTA negotiations seem to be on track for conclusion later this year. Ratification is expected to be swift and implementation can then be started.

The Covid19 virus casts its shadow over all planning and the effects will have a major impact on the world economy. Resolving these problems is likely to take precedence over all other issues and may cause disruption and delays.

## Leaving my role as President.

I was elected president of NZEBC in 2014 and have now served for six years. I feel that NZEBC has an important role to play in promoting NZ – Europe trade, investments and cultural exchange and that the last six years bear that out. From time to time it will be appropriate to review its structure and scope.

I have enjoyed working with Monique Surges as Treasurer and with all other Committee members. I thank you all for your support and for time and interest invested. I am looking forward to trying to promote Europe and NZEBC in whichever way I can going forward. To succeed in future, we need to work collaboratively across borders.

## Thank yous.

Special thanks to:

- All our members for their ongoing support.
- Monique Surges who has been most helpful throughout, including treasury matters.
- Kazik Jasica of PolaNZ for three years of servicing on the board
- Council members for their support with special mention of Maureen Benson-Rea, Martin Holland and Simon Mowatt from our supporting universities.
- The EU delegation in Wellington and MFAT for their support.

Frank Olsson  
President NZEBC