

## Welcome Reception for the New EUI Researchers and Fellows Piazza Mino, Fiesole, 8 September 2011

*“In primo luogo, vorrei **ringraziare il sindaco, grande amico dell’Istituto, Fabio Incatasciato**, per le Sue gentili parole e per aver ospitato i ricercatori dell'Istituto e per aver **dato loro il “benvenuto” nel comune di Fiesole** qui in questa bellissima piazza.*

***Sono molto grato per quest'occasione d'incontro** che offre la possibilita' di **rinforzare i legami di amicizia tra lo IUE e il comune di Fiesole** che ci ospita sulle sue belle colline.*

*Dal momento che buona parte dei nostri nuovi ricercatori **non parla ancora l'Italiano molto bene** – infatti tutti stanno seguendo in questo mese un corso di lingua – **continuerò il mio discorso in Inglese.***

*For those of you that are not as strong in Italian yet – which by the way is something you should work on as much as possible: **I just thanked the mayor of Fiesole for his kind words and for organising this welcome here on this beautiful piazza.***

*I said that I am very **grateful to the comune di Fiesole** for having this welcome, a nice expression of our friendly relationship.*

*Once again, I want to **congratulate you on living and working over the upcoming period in such a beautiful place.** A place that has so much to offer you!*

*I have lived in Fiesole for one and a half years now, and every **day I am stunned by the sheer beauty of this town and its view** over Florence.*

*Many of your friends and family will certainly envy you, because **the words Fiesole, Florence and Tuscany have great connotations all over the world** and are **synonyms for art, history and beauty.***

*However, let me also **warn you in this regard.** You should be aware of the so-called **Stendhal syndrome**: this **mental illness**, which is also called **Florence-syndrome**, causes dizziness, confusion or even hallucinations **when one is exposed to too much beauty and beautiful art in a single place.***

***Stendhal described this symptom after visiting Florence in 1817;** so watch out that you **do not enjoy too much of the beauty you will encounter here...***

*And: **hiding yourself behind books and computers to work** is a protection mechanism **that has been proven very efficient.***

*When Stendhal came here almost 200 years ago, **he wrote that Florence was crowded with tourists and he had to escape to the hills to find rest. Imagine what a shock he would have if he saw Florence today!***

***Anyway, on a more serious note, Fiesole and Tuscany are simply marvellous places full of cultural and gastronomic offerings.** I, certainly as well as the mayor and many of your new colleagues, can give you some good **hints on which spots you should not miss.***

*We, at the EUI, have to contribute to the development of Europe's scientific and cultural heritage, and this is a good place to do so. The root of European culture can be found around us, the roman amphitheatre, the Palazzo Comunale, the duomo and the monastery of San Francesco.*

*Let me say a few words about the cultural and historical heritage of Fiesole.*

***Founded some centuries BC, the antic "Faesulae" was an important member of the Etruscan confederacy** – the remains of the ancient walls that you can see show this.*

***During the Roman Empire, Sulla colonised Fiesole with veterans. Today, we are colonising Fiesole, not with veterans but with young People from all over the world. In the Middle Ages Fiesole was more powerful than Florence in the valley below.***

*The two cities were fighting until Fiesole was destroyed by the Florentines in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and since then, they have **lead a very fruitful coexistence.***

***During the renaissance, Fiesole had a strong impact on the rediscovery of the value of humanism, science and education.***

***Many leading figures in Florentine history lived in the hills of Fiesole and several villas, such as the Medici villa just around the corner, testify this.***

*Fiesole was also **important in religious history.** Since the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the diocese de Fiesole had **many influential bishops**, who resided in the beautiful Duomo, which you can see right there.*

*Fiesole also has an **outstanding cultural tradition.***

***Boccaccio's famous "Decameron" was strongly influenced by his stay here in Fiesole, praising the joy of living whilst the plague was decimating the Florentine population below.***

Many **other famous people lived in Fiesole**. To name **just a few residents, Mino da Fiesole** - who gave the name to this Piazza and **Fra Angelico** the famous 15<sup>th</sup> century sculptor and the renaissance painter, known by his contemporaries as **Fra Giovanni di Fiesole** and who the **Italians call today, il Beato Angelico**.

More recently, the **painter Arnold Böcklin**, who is buried here, or the writers **Herman Hesse and Albert Camus**, who spent some time up here in the hills, and the American architect Wright, who discovered Fiesole while escaping New York with his new love.

But I also **want to mention the three carabinieri**, who are known as the **“martiri di Fiesole”**. In 1944, they were part of the partisan fight against fascist forces and the Germans threatened to kill 10 civilians if they did not deliver themselves. To **protect the life of these innocents**, they surrendered and they **were consequently executed just at the top of the hill**. Certainly, our efforts and the work we do regarding the **construction of Europe** will help to ensure that **such cruelties will never happen again**. You should go to visit the monument in **their memory**.

In the middle ages, **the neighbouring cities were fighting each other**. Today, it seems **unimaginable**; Florence and Fiesole feel as though they belong to the same nation.

Until 70 years ago, **the European nations were fighting each other**. Today, it doesn't make sense either.

**This is the way we have built Europe. Stop fighting with the neighbours and create a feeling of community. Overcome the antagonism to create a common identity.**

**In this spirit, you are invited, not to behave like foreigners or extraterrestrials, but to be a part of the daily life of Florence and Fiesole”**

Fiesole, 8 September 2011



Josep Borrell Fontelles