

VILLA VIGONI - German/Italian Center

Activities Report - Year 2016

Virginia Coda Nunziante

1. Introduction

In 2016, the “Villa Vigoni Association” celebrated the 30th anniversary as of its birth, dating back to April 21st 1986 when both German and Italian Foreign Ministers of the time, Hans Dietrich Genscher and Giulio Andreotti, signed an intergovernmental agreement for the creation of the Association. Its purpose was that of promoting Italian-German relations in the fields of science, education and culture, including their connections with economy, society and politics.

The establishment of the Association was part of the 1956 Cultural Agreement and the joint support and use of Villa Vigoni was in line with Ignazio Vigoni’s will, which was that of providing study stays, talks, round tables, summer seminars and art events at the Villa. The Association, in addition to fostering bilateral relations, is well framed in the European scenario and the relationships developed between the two Countries thus become an active contribution to Europe within Europe.

The Association carries out its activity aware of the common development had by Germany and Italy in the past and contemporary history and of the political-economic and cultural-artistic close ties between the two Countries, promoting the encounter and mutual understanding, while allowing a constant exchange of knowledge and experiences in the various fields.

The interdisciplinary areas of interest of the two Countries, the receptiveness to themes of various interest and participation from other European and world Countries are important principles at the base of the Association work.

The main members of the Association are BMBF (Federal Ministry for Education and Research) for Germany and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Italy. It is a European binational institution with a board of directors and a members’ Assembly. The National Research Council is one of the members supporting the exchange of scientific knowledge.

2. Main activities carried out by Villa Vigoni during 2016 significant for Italy and for CNR

The double anniversary: Villa Vigoni’s Thirty-Year Anniversary and the celebrations for the 200 years as of Goethe’s journey to Italy, gave to 2016 a specific leading theme: “30 years of Villa Vigoni 1986-2016: a Italo/German house for a changing Europe”. The programmed events focused on two aspects: political current topics and the history of culture.

The Italian-German Center has organized a series of scientific and cultural events of remarkable interest, both at European and international level:

- the meeting of the Italian and German correspondents with the Federal Minister of Finance Schäuble held in Berlin in January;
- the meeting of the two State Presidents in Turin in April;
- the joint visit of the two Ministers of Education Wanka and Giannini to Villa Vigoni on May 3rd for the ceremony of the 30th Anniversary of the Association when they opened a special session on dual training jointly organized by MIUR and BMBF, followed by the signing of a Italo-German Memorandum of Understanding in the same field. It was also inaugurated the exhibition on the relations between Mylius and Goethe;

- the Vigoni-Lecture held in Berlin with the participation of Laura Boldrini President of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy
- two workshops on the political importance of the painter Francesco Hayez and on the "European Citizen"
- the Vigoni Forum "Europe and Migration" with annual concert;
- Vigoni Summer seminar in Italy;
- Vigoni Forum for students;
- some DFG research conferences and debates regarding European issues;
- the Euro Workshop;
- a workshop on Europe's history and its future entitled "Villa Vigoni with and for young people";
- a joint symposium with the Italian-German Association of Frankfurt on the subject: "Goethe and Romanticism".

These events were part of a broad program: most of them gained great consensus and the Association was also promoted through:

- The FAZ ("Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung"), which published a half-page article on Villa Vigoni,
- three radio programs that broadcasted reportages about the Italian-German Center.

3. Activities carried out in 2016 as representative within the Association and the impact on the Italian scientific community

During 2016, the undersigned, as CNR Delegate, has participated in both meetings of Villa Vigoni Board of Directors (spring session on March 13th and fall session on November 17th).

The two Governing Councils also discussed the 2017 programming, which will be mainly characterized by the sixty years since the signing of the Treaties of Rome: the Association plans to organize the annual Vigoni-Lecture, right in the Italian capital. As for the anniversary, the venues scheduled for 2017 will be focused on the responsibility of politics and science in today's Europe.

The undersigned, on the basis of this suggestion, but also in prefiguration of the new European Research Framework Program, has proposed to use Villa Vigoni as a platform for a common discussion between German, Italian, French research institutions and possibly other countries on future strategies for innovation and scientific research in Europe.

In 2016, the offices of the two German and Italian Presidents were renewed. The Board of Directors has taken into account the nominees suggested by the two Ministries and proposed the following candidates: for the Italian part: the Ambassador in Berlin Michele Valensise from 1.1.2017 to 31.12.2020; for the German part: Ambassador Michael Gerdts from 1.1.2017 to 31.12.2019. The Presidents were: the first one, elected and, the second one confirmed.

The undersigned, while acknowledging the newly elected Ambassador Valensise as a prominent personality in his field, was sorry to learn that MAE decided to not confirm as president the Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, elected in 2013.

4. Evaluation of the participation in the Union in terms of benefits and membership cost

The National Research Council, as representative of Italian institutions in the field of research, science and education, is the Italian Permanent Councilor to the Board of Directors of Villa Vigoni and joins the Association, since 2006. CNR permanent representative is its President and myself, thanks to an official mandate. The annual membership fee (€300.00) is considerably refunded by all the initiatives organized by the Association which help strengthen bilateral relations and not only.

Also worth mentioning are the funds provided by MIUR for the 2016 Trilateral Research Conferences (€ 40,000) and a further MIUR financing (€174,000) allocated for scientific research institutes as a contribution to the costs of research itself and its dissemination.

5. Evaluation of Italians' attendance and how to improve interest and involvement

The events organized by the Association always have a good Italian participation.

The next year's events could be the occasion, along with the Vigoni Lecture in Rome, for the involvement of the Italian scientific community and for possible launch of new international collaborations, also for actions with France, our neighbor, aimed at an exchange of knowledge and experience.

6. Italian experts with important roles within the Union or within related Committees and Programs

In 2016, were elected in the Board of Directors: Dr. Antonietta Scalera of MIUR and Prof. Giuseppe Zorzi of the Independent Province of Trento.

7. Conclusions

As, due to low budget, 2016 has been scarcely operational, it is desirable to also promote and activate, during 2017, bilateral meetings with the German RPO Helmholtz.

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dr. Virginia Coda Nunziante
Head of International Relations Office - CNR
CNR Delegate for Villa Vigoni