



## **FEE Tax Day 2013**

### **'Towards responsible taxation? The role of policymakers - tax administrations - tax advisors – taxpayers'**

**Brussels, 2 October 2013**

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Closing remarks: **Olivier Boutellis-Taft**, CEO of the Federation of European Accountants

#### **A time to stop bashing and start cooperating**

After a day of thought-provoking presentations and debate, it is now my privilege to bring this conference to a close, although I think we all know it could have gone on for a few more hours.

First I would like to thank all of you for joining us today, for your questions and your dedication to this absolutely essential topic. I would like to extend my thanks to our moderators and speakers for their contributions, as well as the entire FEE staff for making today possible. I will keep these closing remarks brief, and will not attempt to summarize all that we have heard today.

And we have heard a lot. The different stakeholders present have provided us with a lot of information – there was a lot of debate – we have seen there is a lot of public scrutiny and expectations. All this has shed new light on issues which until very recently were not usually in the spotlight. However we equally saw that there is also a lot of confusion and a lot of diverging views, including even some quite extreme views from both ends of the spectrum. But at the end of the day, we are all in the same boat.

Before us we have a difficult situation which forces us to take a holistic approach – a word which has been used many times today. We have a high degree of tax complexity; we have many inconsistencies: there is little consistency in tax policy at European level and often at national level as well. And we have tax competition

The fundamental concern is not simply a small number of taxpayers; it is not (only) tax avoidance, instead it is truly a systemic issue that we face. Solving one element of the jigsaw will not bring sustainable change.

We leave this conference inspired, and with food for thought which I am confident will contribute to the further evolution of the debate. We have been reminded of the Laffer curve and it was interesting to hear a colleague from a tax administration saying that there may be instances where less means more. It was interesting to hear about examples from outside of Europe, like Singapore, where a similar philosophy helps making tax collection more efficient. We heard about how technology could be leveraged to create a win-win situation for tax administrations, for public finance and for tax payers alike, but it was also made clear that certain lawmakers are simply not doing their share of the work to make this happen. Perhaps we should talk not only about "responsible" taxpayers and responsible tax advisors, but also about responsible lawmakers.

Ultimately I think that if we want to move forward, the time has come to end the blame game, stop pointing fingers, and start cooperating.

At FEE we promote cooperation amongst our members and amongst stakeholders. This is exactly what has brought us all to today's debate. You may have seen from our banner that we "stand for trust and integrity". This is not only about following regulation – it is also about behaving in an ethical manner and "doing the right thing", as the English saying goes.

I will end with this, and now the "right thing to do" is to invite you to join us for a cocktail. Thank you again for coming, and we look forward to seeing you next time.