

LAUDATIO:
PROF. JAAP W. DE ZWAAN

TON VAN DEN BRINK*

Dear Members of the Group, dear professor de Zwaan, dear Jaap,

IT IS an honour and a pleasure for me to be able to address you here today. Especially since this year it has been exactly 25 years since I got to know you when I applied for a PhD position at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam. It is already a bit late in the day and we are here with no less than 3 speakers. It just shows how popular you are. But it also means we will have to be a little bit efficient in the words we address to you. After some general observations from my side, Flora will delve more deeply into all aspects of your professional life and then Matteo will focus on your role here in the European Group of Public Law.

I would like to focus on three personal qualities that I believe define who you are and how you work. Then I would like to address three themes in EU law that are very dear to you.

It may be a bit odd to start with elaborating on your personal qualities before actually giving an impression of how your career has been and what your contribution to public law has been. But in this case I think it is right to do so.

From the beginning of my PhD journey, 25 years ago, I have very much enjoyed working with you. Looking back, what has been a major factor in this regard has been that you always treat even the youngest and newest colleagues as a *serious discussion partner*. This has been tremendously important, not just for me but for all the PhD can-

* Professor of EU Legislative Studies, Utrecht University, The Netherlands

didates that you have supervised. And it has indeed been an impressive list of people that have written a dissertation under your guidance. Being treated as a serious discussion partner is immensely important to foster trust and self-confidence among young scholars. For some, like Türkan Ertuna and Olga Sidorenkova, who came from abroad, this was perhaps even more important and helped them find their place in the country, at the EUR and in their research.

This quality of taking all your discussion partners seriously, even the most junior, goes hand in hand with your boundless *optimism*. Never any doubt that any of the projects would not come to a successful end, no doubt that difficult concepts would be unmanageable or that the time would simply be insufficient to finish in time. That optimism is contagious and equally important for young scholars like we were that find it difficult to oversee all.

The third quality that I would like to mention here is your strong sense of *community*. In the first place the EU law group in the wider law faculty. With weekly meetings, social events and the like you made sure that this group was a strong 'micro'-community in the Erasmus School of Law. Our reunion, just a couple of weeks ago is a testimony of the long-lasting effect thereof.

Your community-oriented approach brings me to your role in academia and practice. I will be short on this as Flora will further elaborate on this. But what I do want to mention is how academia and practice go hand in hand for you. In fact, your whole career is a testimony thereof. I think that there are no places where you feel better at home than in places like the one we have here – the European Group of Public Law – where an international and European group of public law scholars and practitioners meet and connect.

These three qualities in my view impact the *three main themes* that you have been active in. The first is *EU enlargement*. A prime example here was your inaugural lecture at The Hague university of applied sciences in which you demonstrated a very bold – to me at least – approach to countries that in your view could belong to the EU at some point in time. It is, however, not so much the number of countries but rather your approach to enlargement that deserves mention. It is not about the contribution of enlargement to increasing wealth on the continent (or the increased potential to tackle common

problems) but to you it has a deeper dimension: the persuasion that the countries which are not part of the EU are still a member of the 'European family'. The EU is simply where they belong. So, your sense of community, visible at the 'micro-level' in your role in the EU law department at the EUR, also has a 'macro-level', demonstrated in your perspective on the EU.

Treaty reform and EU institutional matters is a second theme on which you have been active. Especially in this regard the connection between practice and academia is a strong one. You have brought a wealth of practice experience to the university with your involvement as an 'institutionalist' at the Dutch Ministry for foreign affairs. Especially your involvement in various treaty reforms is notable, perhaps culminating in your role in the negotiation of the Treaty of Amsterdam. It is no surprise that in your academic work you have often taken a practical approach to EU institutional law, an approach in which the question: does it make the EU decision-making work? has been a key one.

Your experiences at the Ministry have equally informed your work on *EU Justice and Home Affairs* and migration law in particular. Your involvement in the committee set up under Article K3/K4 of the Treaty of Maastricht sparked your interest for these matters already at a time when this was still a very novel area of European cooperation. At the academic side, it has resulted in numerous works in which also the institutional matters have been well-addressed. In doing so, you have made an important contribution – with the other members of the team – to put this area 'on the map'.

There is so much more to say but I will limit myself now to saying as a final point: Jaap, you are a true European with a strong belief in its value and its values, you are a wonderful colleague and you are a friend to cherish!