Václav Havel: Parliament dedicates building to former Czech president

A new Parliament building named after Václav Havel, former Czech president and defender of human rights, was inaugurated in Strasbourg on 5 July.

The European Parliament inaugurated a new building in Strasbourg on 5 July named after Václav Havel in the presence of his widow Dagmar Havlová, Parliament President Antonio Tajani and Nathalie Loiseau, the French minister for European affairs. The Parliament decided to name the building after the former Czech president because of his valuable work as a human and civil rights defender.

During the inauguration ceremony, Tajani paid tribute to Havel: "His life and his commitment to democracy inspire us and compel us to continue the efforts to build a fairer, stronger Europe which is closer to its citizens."

The Parliament President also reminded people of what Havel had said when he addressed the European Parliament in 2009: 'If I feel myself to be a European, it does not mean that I cease to be a Czech. In fact, the opposite is the case: as a Czech, I am also a European. Europe is the homeland of our homelands."

The building is decorated with several works of art in memory of Havel: a bronze bust by Czech sculptor Marie Šeborová located in front of the entrance, 25 photographs by his official photographer Tomki Němec from the period after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, and a tapestry designed by Petr Sís in the main meeting room.

Background

The building was built in 1955 for the Council of Europe, which used it until 2007. The Parliament bought it in 2012 and completely renovated it. The decision to name it after Havel was made in mid-January 2012 on the basis of a proposal by Czech MEP Libor Rouček, who was a Parliament Vice-President at the time. The majority of the building will be used by the Parliament, roughly a third by the European Ombudsman's offices.
Find out more
Speech by Antonio Tajani
Video of the inauguration
Photos
Inauguration of the Vaclav Havel building: Dagmar Havlová (middle) and Antonio Tajani (right)