

Obituary

On 8 January 2013 Dieter Rogalla died aged 85. He was a founding member of the Kangaroo Group. Dieter had the charisma to motivate people for the idea of breaking down borders between the Member States of the European Union. His trademarks were his customs barrier and his bike. After the first direct elections in June 1979, there existed two distinct streams of thought within the European Parliament on how best to develop the European Community. One group was of the opinion that the time had come to put forward a proposal for a European Constitution. The other group of MEPs felt that the Community should first regain its capacity to act before turning towards major new goals. Dieter Rogalla was a member of the latter group. He insisted that Europe should be developed step by step and the next step should be the opening of the borders. His professional experience as a former customs official was very useful for this project.



The name of the Kangaroo Group was chosen at an early meeting when Dieter Rogalla, who had been to Australia, was wearing a kangaroo badge. He argued that the Kangaroo was a particularly appropriate symbol because of its peaceful nature and its ability to take great leaps forward with an empty pouch over any boundaries.

In 1983 Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher visited the European Parliament in Strasbourg. At this occasion the Kangaroo Group had a very intensive discussion about the potential advantages of a European Home Market for the companies and citizens of Europe. At this time, Thatcher was still very sceptical about this project, specially the loss of the British veto in matters of the Single Market. Fully equipped with custom signs, Dieter Rogalla showed his will to change her mind. Later the British government decided to endorse the project of the Internal Market.

During his time as Member of the European Parliament and ever since he organized bike tours across Europe from north to south and from west to east. This proved to be a very powerful instrument for the idea of a united Europe.

Dieter Rogalla died too early while he was still preparing his next tour. He was a good friend and we will miss him.