Remembering Alexandre Marius Dées de Stério, 20 years on

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On 11 October 2006, Professor Alexandre Marius Dées de Stério died in the train collision at Zoufftgen, on the border between France and Luxembourg. Twenty years on, Humanists International remembers a colleague and friend who gave much of his life to our movement.

Marius first came to us as a young man, through our youth section, then known as IHEYO. He went on to serve as President of the Union Radical-Humaniste Luxembourgeoise.

His most lasting contribution was at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. In 1980 he became the main representative of what was then the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU). He held that role for more than 25 years. For much of that time, he was almost the only humanist voice in the room.

He was not easily impressed. In his first report to our Board, he found the human rights debates at the Council repetitive. But he was clear that it mattered for humanists to be present and to be better known. He then spent the next quarter of a century making that happen. He served as Rapporteur of the NGO Liaison Committee and spoke many times on human rights and other issues. His work helped build the standing that Humanists International still holds at the Council of Europe today.

His work was widely recognised. In 2000 the Council of Europe gave him its distinguished Pro-Merito award for bringing its work to a wider public through the media. In 2005, at the World Humanist Congress in Paris, he received the IHEU Distinguished Humanist Award for his tireless work for international humanism. He died the following year.

Leon Langdon, Senior Policy Officer at Humanists International, said:

> "Today we take it for granted that humanists have a seat at the table in Strasbourg. That was not always the case. For years, Marius was often the only person in the room speaking up for humanists and the non-religious. He made sure that freedom of thought and belief was understood to cover all of us, not just religious communities. At a time when democracy and human rights are under pressure across Europe, his patient, persistent work is a reminder of why it matters for humanists to be present and to engage in often thankless advocacy.. The work that we do now, and the success, is built on the work of Marius and other humanist pioneers."

Christian Meyers, Member of the Executive Board of AHA Lëtzebuerg, also gave this testimonial:

> "Twenty years ago, on 11 October 2006, Professor Alexandre Marius Dées de Stério lost his life in the train collision at Zoufftgen, just across the Luxembourg–French border. With him, Luxembourg and Europe lost one of their most committed voices for humanism.
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> His bond with the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) began in his youth, through its youth

> organisation, and lasted a lifetime. For more than twenty years he represented the IHEU at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, where he served as Rapporteur of the NGO Liaison Committee and spoke many times on human rights. The Council honoured him with its Pro Merito award, and in 2005, at the World Humanist Congress in Paris, the IHEU gave him its Distinguished Humanist Award. At home he presided over the Union Radical-Humaniste Luxembourgeoise.
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> As a university teacher at the Heinrich Heine University of Düsseldorf and the University of Metz (today part of the Université de Lorraine), he worked closely with and mentored many students. They deeply admired and respected his humanist commitment, which he lived every day and generously shared with them.
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> Marius Dées de Stério was a tireless fighter for laïcité, humanism, freedom, solidarity and fraternity. He carried these same ideals into Freemasonry, as a distinguished member of the Grand Orient de Luxembourg and as the founder of the Grand Orient of Germany.
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> Marius was also an exemplary husband and father, and in his family, too, he lived and shared his values and commitments. He was a major figure in Luxembourg society, widely known and respected. People also remember his sense of humour and his critical eye, often expressed with a refreshing irony or even sarcasm.
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> To this day, Marius lives on in our hearts and, as he would have wished, even more in our discussions, exchanges and debates, in our productive and good-natured disputes. Today, we sorely miss people like Marius.
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> We miss you, Marius, and thank you for being the person you were, and for inspiring so many people in every part of your life: in your family and among your friends, at university, in Freemasonry and in the humanist movement.
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> Our advocacy work in Europe today stands on foundations that Marius helped to lay. We remember him with gratitude."

Sharing memories

His daughter, Eléonore Dées de Stério, is gathering her father's writings, recordings and papers. She would be glad to hear from anyone who knew or worked with him, and from anyone who holds photographs, letters or other material about his work. If you can help, please contact us at **office@humanists.international** and we will pass your message on.

Our thoughts remain with Eléonore and all of Marius's family.