

## Laudatio Pia Letto-Vanamo

**M. Maresceau**

Prof. Letto-Vanamo was born in Rovaniemi in the North of Finland. She studied law at the University of Helsinki. After her graduation she became a research associate at the Finnish Academy and university assistant. She prepared a PhD research on “The Beginning and Early History of the Finnish Legal Profession” and obtained her doctorate in 1989. Afterwards she became assistant professor in History of Law at the University of Helsinki and guest researcher at the Max-Planck-Institut für Europäische Rechtsgeschichte in Frankfurt am Main. In 1991 she was appointed professor in Roman Law and History of Law at the University of Helsinki.

In 1997, while continuing various teaching commitments in History of Law, she was also attached to the Institute of International Economic Law of the University of Helsinki. In 1999 she received the Jean Monnet Chair at the same university, which implied a strong orientation of her academic activities towards EU affairs, in particular EU law. In 2001 she became Director of the Institute of International Economic Law. Recently, she was also appointed Director of the University of Helsinki Graduate School “Foundations of European Law” and became Co-Director of the international research team “Europe as a Market” in the Centre of Excellence for Foundations of European Law and Polity Research. In addition, from 1997 to 2003 prof. Letto-Vanamo was President of the Finnish European Studies Association and in that capacity she was and is a prominent and very active member of ECSA (European Communities Study Association) World.

Prof. Letto-Vanamo was regularly *extra muros* member for doctoral dissertations in Finland and abroad and taught as a visiting professor at various foreign universities.

The fields of research of prof. Letto-Vanamo are: history of law and in particular European legal history, the history of the legal profession, the Nordic legal tradition with, of course, a strong emphasis on the specific position of Finland. Within this topic, “access to justice” occupies a prominent place. But, – and this may appear rather astonishing – prof. Letto-Vanamo has been able to combine these initial research fields with a strong orientation of her academic and scientific activities towards European Union law, one of the new branches in the field of law.

Within the area of European Union law, the focus is on the “Third Pillar”, that is the law related to Justice and Home Affairs. The “rule of law” and its role in the broad European legal tradition as a fundamental principle of the European Union receive particular attention and one of her important publications has as a title: “Rechtsstaat als Kriterium für Europa”. It is well-known that respect of the “rule of law” in the political and legal conditions for membership of the European Union, as launched by the 1993 European Council of Copenhagen, is one of the most important considerations in the assessment of a Candidate State’s ability to become EU member.

It is totally impossible in this *laudatio* to provide an exhaustive list of prof. Letto-Vanamo’s publications. Only a few ones can be mentioned here: *History of Assistance in Conflict Resolution in Finland*, Helsinki, 1994; *Beginning and Early History of Finnish Legal Profession*, 1989; *Europe in Law. Lectures in Legal History*, Helsinki, 1995; *The Law of the Ting Community. The Jurisdiction in Sweden-Finland Before the Stabilisation of the Conflict Resolution of the State*, 1995; *Europe as a Legal Community and Possibilities for Co-operation*, Helsinki, 1998; *Access to Justice: A Conceptual and Practical Analysis with Implications for Justice Reforms*, 2005; *Moments of Finnish Justice in the 1970’s*, 2005.

The proposal to award the Sarton Medal to prof. Letto-Vanamo received an enthusiastic and unanimous response from the Law Faculty of Ghent University and the Sarton Committee. The unexpected combination of history of law on the one hand with the process of European integration and cooperation on the other hand makes of prof. Letto-Vanamo a very special, yes indeed unique, laureate. She is one of the very rare law professors who has successfully been able to combine these two at first sight totally different worlds. The most appropriate manner for the Law Faculty to pay

tribute to our colleague prof. Letto-Vanamo for such a “tour de force” was – how could it be else? – the Sarton Medal Award. We are delighted and honoured that she has accepted the Award and that she is today among us to give a lecture on “Law, History and European Integration”.