



EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)

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"The ESU Congress has shown courage"

Part 2 of the report

Leuven. As confirmation of their commitment and encouragement to further action, ESU member-associations have considered the progress and outcomes of the IX. Congress of 4th and 5th November. In an address to President An Hermans, Secretary-General Dumon, and to the editorial staff, delegates stressed the high level of the meeting in Leuven (Belgium). For this stands the speeches, discussions, the unanimous adoption of the DECLARATION OF LEUVEN, the convincing re-election of the President and not least the friendly atmosphere during the two-day discussions in the Provincial House. That the ESU has "stayed on course" is (according to Bernhard Worms) a "calculable organization" and at the same time has arranged new tasks - that is the opinion of numerous delegates and observers.



Among the first to congratulate the re-election of President An Hermans was Dr. Bernhard Worms, her predecessor in office (2001—2013)

With the Congress topic "Together for a safe and social Europe" in an "inclusive society", Europe's largest political seniors' organization takes up current challenges and shows ways of achieving them. Therefore, the awareness of the responsibility of all member-associations to take measurable action in dialogue with their political partners - parties, parliamentarians, governments, municipalities and civil society, appears to this reporter as the concrete aim of the Congress for the coming months and years.

“SI” continues the Congress report from No. 140 in this issue.



An important speech by Herman Van Rompuy, former President of the EU Council.

Seated in the conference praesidium: Honorary-president Maria Kanelloupolou (GR), Bernhard Worms (DE), General Secretary Guido Dumon (BE), Honorary-president Elisabeth Dispaux-Cornil (BE) and Honorary-president Leif Hallberg (SE). At the lectern: President An Hermans



The university library in Leuven was destroyed in both world wars: in 1914 by German troops, in 1940 by the German or British military. Visits are possible. A carillon hangs in the tower since 1928. The building is an attraction for architecture fans from around the world. Congress delegates saw it during the sight-seeing tour.



Left: the Austrian delegates with the former ESU President Dr. Bernhard Worms (left), the ESU Vice-president Heinz K. Becker (5th from left) and the deputy Federal chairman of the Seniors' Association (ÖSB), Franz Karl (in the foreground).



Right: the German Congress delegates with the Vice-presidents Dr. Gabriele Peus-Bispinck and Elke Garczyk, who is also deputy chair of the CSU Seniors' Union in Bavaria (2nd row from left), as well as the deputy Federal chairman of the CDU Seniors' Union, Claus Bernhold (3rd from right).



New in the ESU Praesidium: Zvonko Zinrajh, (Slovenia), SDS Seniors' President, successor to A Bogataj



As successor to Jouni Mykkänen (I), Marjatta Nykänen, Vice-chair of the Finnish Seniors' Association

EPP Group: signal of unity

Manfred Weber re-elected: "Europe must deliver"

16th November. The "press release" of the European People's Party assesses the "outcome of the EPP Group elections in the European Parliament" as a "strong signal of unity". Manfred Weber (DE) received nearly 98% percent of the valid votes and can continue in his position as chairman until 2019. The following have been elected as vice-presidents: Lara Comi (Italy), Esther de Lange (Netherlands), Mariya Gabriel (Bulgaria), Esteban González Pons (Spain), Francoise Grossetete (France), Sandra Kalniete (Latvia), Marian Jean Marinescu Paulo Rangel (Portugal), József Szájer (Hungary) and Tadeusz Zwiefka (Poland).

Manfred Weber (44) has been a member of the European Parliament since 2004. The EPP is the largest political group, with 216 members from 27 countries. After the elections, Weber said: "the next twelve

months will be decisive for the future of Europe. If we want to fight the growing populism, the EU must wake up finally. They must be aware of their responsibilities. We must show that Europe can deliver and is capable of sustainable solutions. "

Weber, who is also deputy chairman of the CSU in Bavaria, took over the group presidency in 2014 from Joseph Daul (FR), who succeeded Wilfried Martens as chairman of the EPP. Prof. An Hermans warmly congratulated Manfred Weber on behalf of the ESU.

Leuven: speeches at the ESU Congress

Joseph Daul, in his video message: the ESU and EPP have common interests. The "Declaration of Leuven" is characterized by responsibility and solidarity.

Belgium Minister of Justice Koen Geens: The strengthening of nationalism reminds us that it once led to the (1st) world war. The cooperation of the security authorities, nationally and internationally, is indispensable. "The move from poverty is understandable." "We survive if we allow others to survive." "We will all die if environmental standards are not implemented in China."

President An Hermans: "To arrive in a safe and social society" is significant for all of Europe. Attention is focused on disabled and non-disabled people. We elders are called upon to motivate young people to become political "because it is worthwhile". (The activity report was presented to delegates in printed form.)

General-Secretary Guido Dumon: The ESU headquarters invests in activities, not in personnel. The activity in Brussels is rendered voluntarily due to financial constraints and is supported by students occasionally. The new website will be available soon. The Newsletter contributes to the communication between member-associations.

Treasurer Etienne Vanderrost: The delay in payment by certain member-associations is causing problems. For the new website a (one-time) payment of 7,000 EURO has to be raised.

Wouter Beke, President CD&V: "For our generation, Europe is the haven we love. But it needs to be cherished and nurtured." "Age is maturity - the same as being young, only in a different garment. The ESU under An Hermans' leadership gives these people a voice." His three children want to be 100 or older!

Chris Taes, Chairman of the Provincial Council of Flemish Brabant: the ESU as part of civil society and with its own goals and views - so to individual freedom and to social principles – it is an "important instrument for understanding across borders".

Guido Dumon: 75% of the European budget is managed and spent by regional and municipal authorities. More than 60% of national legislation is the implementation of EU decisions.

The following two persons comment on the use of EU funds in projects:

Sus Bergman advises regions, cities, chambers of commerce and environmental organizations in the southern Netherlands and northern Belgium. Her aim is to use the "Interreg Program" to promote the competitiveness of the regional economy while ensuring the involvement of disabled and non-disabled workers. With that, important concerns of the "EU 2014 - 2020" project are also fulfilled.

Marleen Van Hees, “Care” from “Landelijke Thuiszorg”/“country home” has acquired an unused vicarage by means of EU funds and after conversion (e.g. creating wheelchair access), has set up a home for socially vulnerable families. They stay here for a few hours or all day, participate in activities for the community and use a variety of body care products. Doctors confirm the positive effects of this commitment.

Herman Van Rumpoy, former EU Council President: summing up on recent developments and events, Van Rumpoy noted:

“Europe is no longer an island of stability”. It must always “expect the unexpected”. Fortunately, the Euro-crisis was solved and the Paris Climate Protection Agreement has been agreed. Crises would arise, but some were also home-made. EU decisions cost (much) time and unanimity. There are “bridges to build between those who stand before and behind the walls”.

Van Rumpoy described Europe as an “immigration continent”, pleaded for an open economy and an open, tolerant society. He wants “more moderation, less aggression”. Good economic growth is the prerequisite for secure social systems. He sees as urgent tasks, among other things, improvements in refugee policy, economic and monetary union, as well as military cooperation. Europe must also take on more global responsibility and recover its positive image. Van Rumpoy counts on steps towards more intensive cooperation with Russia. “Key values” such as peace and democracy retain their importance.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Heinz K. Becker MEP (Austria): Africa needs help in the form of a “Marshall Plan”, which could reduce the causes of escape. “Many want to get out, and it is to be feared that populists will take over the governments.” He pleads for compulsory “political education” because 80% of citizens do not know what they are voting for. Having more children should not be left to the immigrants! As “the nation-states are failing”, the EU should be given the main responsibility for regulating retirement allowance increases.

Astrid Heiberg (Norway): “What we wanted has happened: we are getting older. This means more time and opportunity for social participation.” The years gained have to be filled with life. As an eighty-year-old, she now advises the government on the topic of longer working life (on a voluntary basis) and lifelong learning.

Lidmila Nemcova (Czech Republic): In many parts of the world Christians suffer because of their faith. Her seniors' Association SKS is aware of the importance of Catholic social teaching and advocates the dignity of every human being. She also spoke of the low level of pensions in her country. A regional conference is being prepared on intergenerational solidarity. Mrs Nemcova encouraged more intensive cooperation between the (seniors' associations) of former communist countries, which should also include reflections on the causes of the revolutionary upheavals of 1989 and the experiences of political prisoners.

Benoit Dreze, Member of the Walloon regional parliament (Belgium), noted that while the employment rate of older workers has increased, poverty and social exclusion have remained. Summarizing the experiences with the discussion about CETA, he urged all deputies to deal most thoroughly with draft resolutions.

Austria: resistance against rip-off / help for self-help group

The Seniors' Union has made a sharp protest against the raising of fees at the cash withdrawal machines by the bank BAWAG. Ingrid Korosec, the federal chairman, took up the criticism on behalf of many citizens when she denied any justification for the planned financial burden. If the decision was not withdrawn, there would be "other banks that would be happy about new customers" Mrs Korosec said.

"The serious and the cheerful in politics" was presented by Peter Marboe and Franz Karl at a charity event for the self-help group Polyneuropathy at the Springer-Schlössl in Vienna. The one a former city culture councillor, the other a vice-president of the Seniors' Council and the Seniors' Union, they delivered anecdotes and authentic quotes about the celebrities that included Bruno Kreisky, Rudolf Kirchschräger, Kurt Waldheim, Billy Wilder, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Henry Kissinger. The proceeds of the enjoyable evening will help to improve the situation of those affected by this nerve damage - in Austria about one million, including Franz Karl - and to promote research.

The latest edition of the quarterly publication published in the district of Amstetten (Lower Austria) by the Seniors' Union offers recollections of shared experiences (in North Tirol) and gives tips about monitoring blood pressure from the internist Dr. Meyer. Josef Engelmayer urges all elderly persons to attend the event to actively counter the widespread loneliness. In conversation, the honorary editor and honorary chairman, Peter Krupholz, regretted the fact that "Senioren Aktuell" can only now appear with only four pages due to financial constraints.

Angela Merkel: "Many ideas and highly motivated"

20th Nov: The German Federal Chancellor continues to consider the cohesion of society by balancing the interests of "democracy, freedom and respect for the law" as worth striving for. When she announced her renewed candidacy for the CDU presidency (decision on 6th December) and chancellorship (from autumn 2017), she emphasized her determination to face new - also global - challenges with a high level of motivation. She is looking forward to discussions that are free of hatred, detraction and exclusion. The strengthening of the social market economy and social security systems is important to her. The pension would have to be "made future-proof," said Mrs. Merkel. Lifelong learning is of high importance.

Demands from Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria

16th Nov: The CDU Seniors' Union of Baden-Württemberg and the CSU in Bavaria have agreed in Ulm on a position paper in which they confront current political problems. (Text: <http://www.senioren-union-bw.de/>)

Here are some key demands: to increase internal security, more personnel and technology are required; the laws should be strengthened. Criminal activities are not to be tolerated in any case, rather to be prosecuted and to be punished. An early warning system is needed to keep track of people who are radicalising. The publicising of terror and violence is to be punished.

On the subject of flight / migration: "really vulnerable people can always count on us for help." The battle against the causes of flight deserves priority. If the right of the guest is abused, or the reason for refuge ceases, fast repatriation of migrants is necessary. It says finally: "we do not want any immigration which will overwhelm us or burden our social systems excessively."

Social housing must be “massively” promoted, as well as the construction of age-appropriate and flexibly-usable housing. The property directive needs to be amended so that older people also have the opportunity to take out loans for renovation and maintenance.

The “family” chapter is concerned with the maintenance of “family allowances” and the introduction of a “maternal pension” - to restore a fairer balance for women who have given birth and raised children.

The authors argue that the pension level must not fall—as currently discussed—after 2030 to below 43 per cent, but should increase! According to the Austrian model, greater involvement of employers in the financing of the pension system is required. “In order to create incentives even for low-income workers, we demand that a private retirement provision should not be deducted from the basic amount of old age pensions”.

Memorial stone from Aachen for Oświęcim (Auschwitz)

5th November. A 20 kg heavy stone from the cathedral at Aachen (DE) has made its way to Oświęcim. It will be exhibited in the future “Peace Mound” - together with many memorials from all over the world dedicated to the victims of dictatorships and war. The donation from the heritage-rich Aachen cathedral is several centuries old, stressed the cathedral Dean, Manfred von Holtum, at the hand-over to Janusz Marszalek, who runs the construction project on behalf of the Polish Seniors’ Union. The scheme is based on a decision of former concentration camp prisoners. The Aachen Cathedral is connected with the work of the Frankish king (since 768) and emperor (since 800) Charlemagne, who was born in 747 or 748 and died in Aachen in 814. The cathedral is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Mourning for Prof. Dr. Constantin Fatu (Romania)



Prof. Fatu with companion at the Vienna Summer Academy in July 2015

As reported from Romania, Prof. Dr. Constantin Fatu passed away on 10th November. Prof. Dr. An Hermans has warmly condoled on behalf of the European Seniors' Union. In an obituary, she paid tribute to Prof. Fatu as a committed politician who represented PNTCD seniors in the ESU. He was aware of the power of the elderly to improve the situation in his country, which he described repeatedly to the Editor as “beautiful, but poor”. Fatu participated regularly at the Summer Academy in Vienna. However, his acceptance to the Congress had to be withdrawn. Finally, Prof. Fatu had the intention to invite the ESU to his home town of Iasa for a conference. All those who knew him will preserve him in honourable remembrance.

“SI” congratulates ...

... the honorary-president Elisabeth Dispaux-Cornil (Belgium) belatedly on the occasion of her 80th birthday (on 29th June), Ingeborg Uhlenbrock (Germany), the former ESU general secretary, on her 80th birthday (2nd December), and vice-president Lidmila Nemcova (Czech Republic) on her 75th birthday (18th December). Many thanks for their manifold support!

News in Brief

Bernhard Worms has initiated a **“Dialogue between the generations”** in his home town of Pulheim near Cologne. For the first event on 26th November, the Romanian MEP Mureşan was expected. After the introductory words of the host, the parliamentarian spoke on the topic “Do we gamble EUROPE away”?

A **“Baltic Seniors Conference”** was decided on by Congress delegates from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in Leuven. The topic, the date and the venue are still to be decided. General Secretary Guido Dumon has registered the project.

The Congress delegates from Belarus, Tatyana and Alexander Zelko, have reported in detail in their Bulletin “Nashe Pokalene” (“Our Generation”), about their impressions of the ESU Congress in Russian. During the Congress, the Editor gave them an interview about his view on the situation of the elderly in Belarus.

In the magazine “Generácie” of the Slovakian Seniors' Association ZKS (chairman: Jozef Miklosko), detailed, richly illustrated reports on the ESU regional conference in Budapest and the Summer Academy in Vienna were published.

“Generácie” chief editor Dr. Milos Nemecek, a member of the ESU Executive Committee, wants to extend his contacts with the Association of Retired Citizens in Ukraine, who have observer status in the ESU (chairman: Wolodymyr Dzobak). Nemecek has recently devoted two articles in his magazine to the neighbouring country.

The General Secretary of the Robert Schuman Institute (RSI) in Budapest, Nelli Czeglédi, has reaffirmed her continued interest in ESU activities and asked for this Newsletter in English.

According to vice-president Carmen Quintanilla Barba, **“SENIOR INTERNATIONAL”** will be translated into Spanish and distributed in her country.

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