



EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)

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"Prof. Dr. Andreas Khol for President"

On 10th January, The Federal Board of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) has proposed Prof. Kohl as a candidate for Federal President for election in April. Andreas Khol is since September 2005 head of the largest association of the European Seniors' Union, with its 305,000 members. Aware of the additional responsibilities now coming towards him, he has delegated management of the Austrian Seniors' Association (ÖSB) to its elected First Deputy, Ingrid Korosec, with immediate effect. She is chairperson of the Seniors' Association in the capital. ESU President Prof. An Hermans (BE) and her predecessor, Dr. Bernhard Worms (DE), have congratulated Prof. Khol warmly. With the decision of the People's Party to nominate Khol as a candidate for the highest public office, his diverse activities for the well-being of the country are acknowledged. Born in Bergen (Rügen, DE) in 1941, Andreas Khol is a university professor, was an MP for 23 years, including four years as president of the National Council (Austrian Parliament), and alternates with an SPÖ representative as Chairman of the Austrian Seniors' Council, a recognized social partner. Repeatedly, he has led ESU congresses and hosted the Vienna Summer Academy of the ESU for leaders. The ESU will support strongly his candidacy as President of Austria.



Andreas Khol in portrait and (2nd from left) in stimulating conversation with Elmar Brok (DE), the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the European Parliament, during the Summer Academy in Vienna. The ladies: ESU President em. Prof. Dr. An Hermans and - with microphone - the Austrian Interior Minister, Mikl-Leitner.

Andreas Khol has four confirmed competitors currently, and it could be even more. For direct elections, all citizens over 16 years of age are eligible to vote. The term of office of the Federal President is six years. Heinz Fischer (SPÖ) has been in office since 2010 and cannot stand again. For the first time in 2016, members of the family who had ruled Austria, that is the House of Habsburg, are also granted the right to nominate candidates.

“No democracy without freedom of the press”

chanted Polish and German citizens at a rally in Berlin, protesting about the restrictions of the independent working of the media by the new government in Warsaw. Among the guests and speakers were journalists from both countries, representatives from the German and European associations of Journalists, the movement “Reporters without Borders” and also the editor of this newsletter. The protests on 9th January took place at the same time as tens of thousands of citizens in 20 Polish cities. Since October, Poland is governed by the national conservative party, “Law and Justice”/“Prawo i Sprawiedliwość”/PiS. The law, which came into force the day before, is aimed at controlling public radio and television. In future, top positions may only be occupied by people loyal to the regime. The first dismissals had already taken place at this time. Due to changes in the statute of the Constitutional Court, those affected have little hope for the reversal of their dismissals.



At the event organised by the citizens' movement KOD (Committee for the Defence of Democracy), near the Brandenburg Gate, Karl Forster, editor of the journal “POLEN und Wir“ (POLAND and Us), also spoke. The changes in the autumn have not been a democratic change of government, he explained. With xenophobic, anti-Russian, anti-German or anti-Semitic forces there would be no common language, according to Forster. On the other hand, “people in Poland, working for a democratic future of their country: for our freedom and yours”, deserve solidarity. At the rally, the Polish flag, as well as the EU flag, was waved.

The Netherlands EU Council Presidency

The position of the EU-Council President is permanent. Currently, it is the Pole, Donald Tusk; The Presidency – above all responsible for the convening of the summit - changes twice a year. On 1st January, the Netherlands has taken over from Luxembourg. Foreign Minister Bert Koenders, a Social Democrat, spoke in the European Parliament for common action in the migration and counter-terrorism policies. On his list of priorities, however, according to the Wiener Zeitung on 2nd January, is the promotion of the internal market, economic growth, job creation and innovation, the “activating and protecting of EU citizens”, as well as a forward-looking climate and energy policy. The ruling liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy VVD, under Prime Minister Mark Rutte, does not see any

“great vision” for Europe; according to the press commentary the Presidency, limited to the end of June, will be marked by pragmatism. Among the uncertainties is the outcome of the UK vote on remaining in the EU, planned for the summer. Before that, Prime Minister Cameron wants to reduce the appeal of his country to migrants.

In April, a referendum in the Netherlands on the EU Association Agreement EU with Ukraine is fixed, although the outcome is not binding. Since months, the right-wing populist “Partij voor de Vrijheid/ Party for Freedom (PVV)” is far ahead in the polls. It sees itself as an advocate for those to whom the reception of refugee in the Netherlands goes too far.

The European Seniors' Union has granted observer status to the party “Christian-Democratisch Appel (CDA)” many years ago; unfortunately, it has not progressed to full membership yet. The CDA, set up in 1980, provided the Prime Minister from 1977 to 1994 and from 2002 to 2010, and is in opposition since 2012 due to a considerable loss of votes. With 59,000 followers, however, it is still the largest membership party in the country - represented by five MEPs in the European Parliament.

Three religions. One house

The Petriplatz is the centre of the first documented settlement in Berlin, more specifically: in Coelln. The first written reference to the (double) city on both banks of the River Spree is here from the year 1237. In the document, a priest named Simeon is mentioned. The ruins of the church of St. Peter, destroyed during the war, stood until 1964 on the “Köllnischen Fish Market”. Also, floor plans of former town hall and school building were discovered, exposed and documented. Now this place will receive a unique future. About 800 years after the first church to be built, a new religious building - a house of three religions – will arise. Under its roof, a church (called a house of prayer), a synagogue and a mosque will be located. The central entrance leads into the prayer rooms on the first floor, but only through a space in the centre which will be its connection and bridge and will be called a “house of learning”. Even Buddhists and Hindus will be invited to use it, it is said.

The construction is crowned by a 40m high tower with a glass dome, which directs the light into the interior, and which should be accessible. It will be built according to a design by the Berlin architectural office, Kuehn Malvezzi. The project already has a name: “House of One”. (According to information in the newspaper, “die Kirche”) *Contact: Friedrichsgracht 53, 10178 Berlin; email address: info@house-of-one.org*

From disorder to coordinated action

Admittedly it was common for the reception and accommodation to be disorderly, but in the meantime it runs in an orderly fashion, explained Dietmar Woidke, the Prime Minister of the German state of Brandenburg, which surrounds the capital, Berlin. In 2016, he expects 30-40,000 refugees to be cared for in Brandenburg. In the past year, there have been many examples of friendly welcome of the asylum seekers, but also several attacks on accommodations.

For the Greek Migration Minister, Ioannis Mouzalas, coordinated action by countries is indispensable; unilateral action has resulted in a dangerous domino effect, he told the “Berliner Morgenpost”. He continued: “Germany has held Europe together in this crisis and in addition, has contributed to ensuring that this Europe of the Enlightenment has not fallen back to the Middle Ages.” The fact that the country had absorbed almost 90 percent of all refugees deserves recognition. Mouzalas, a gynaecologist, is a founding member of the aid organization, “Doctors of the World” and took part in 25 missions abroad - including in Afghanistan and in the city of Kobane, besieged by the “IS”. He demanded that the smugglers on the Turkish coast be stopped and the escapees prevent from putting

their lives at risk. Once people are on the sea, there is “ethically, politically and according to international law no other option but to rescue them”.

“We do not have a lot of time”

If it were up to Prof. Hans Joachim Schellnhuber (DE), the de-carbonisation of the global economy, that is the banishment of coal for energy generation, would be fully completed globally by mid-century. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2015 is rated as ground-breaking by the Potsdamer climatologists. The measures of individual countries, INDCs (Intended Nationally Determined Contributions), nevertheless presently suffice only to limit the temperature rise to 2.7 degrees - instead of the specified 1.5 to 2.0 degrees. The Paris Agreement contains control mechanisms and sets out a clear reduction of emissions.

The scientist who teaches also in the USA explained in an interview with the newspaper “die Kirche” from 3rd January, that the extraction of brown coal mined in the German state of Brandenburg since 150 years, has no future - “except this will be exploited in a completely climate-neutral way”. The humanity still has in its hands to avert its self-destruction but: “we do not have a lot of time”.

With the last coal train from the Cottbus-Nord opencast mine on 23rd December (DE), a new and possibly final chapter for brown coal mining and energy production from fossil materials in Lower Lusatia was started. The Swedish company Vattenfall has separated itself from its brown coal unit in Lausitz, to which belong four (of the previous 17) opencast mines. Whether it succeeds with the sale is doubtful. Currently, 750 people are employed in this once high-profile branch of industry (opencast mining, the Jänschwalde power station) around Cottbus. The population puts its hope in the flooding of the former coal fields, whereby the structurally weak Cottbus would get its own “Baltic”, the largest future inland lake area in Germany, with a strong centre of attraction for those seeking relaxation.

In the area around Guben (DE) on the German-Polish border river Neisse, citizens of Kerkwitz, Atterwasch and Grabko have been fighting for years against the planned resettling of their homeland. They are supported by their Polish neighbours. Meanwhile, they are also concerned about plans for an opencast mine on the Polish riverbank in the Gubin/Brody area, which should go into operation on 1st January 2030.

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ESU Meeting Calendar 2016

MARCH	11 – 12 ⁽¹⁾	Presidium	Leuven (Belgium)
MAY	26 – 27 ⁽²⁾	ESU Conference	Budapest (Hungary)
	26 17:00 – 19:00	Executive Committee	Budapest (Hungary)
JULY	1 – 2 – 3 ⁽³⁾	Summer Academy	Vienna (Austria)
	1 12:30 – 14:00	Presidium	Vienna (Austria)
	1 17:00 – 19:00	Executive Committee	Vienna (Austria)
SEPTEMBER or OCTOBER	To Be Confirmed	ESU Conference	(Slovenia)
NOVEMBER	4 11:00 – 12:30	Outgoing Presidium	Leuven (Belgium)
	4 – 5 ⁽⁴⁾	ESU Statutory Congress	Leuven (Belgium)
	5 13:30 – 14:00	Incoming Presidium	Leuven (Belgium)

¹ From Friday 14:00 until Saturday 12:00

² From Thursday 14:00 until Friday 13:00

³ From Friday 14:00 until Sunday 12:30

⁴ From Friday 14:00 until Saturday 13:00