



EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)

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Acts of terrorism condemned worldwide

EU Commission President Juncker condemned sharply the terrorist acts in Belgium's capital on 22nd March. ESU President An Hermans agreed with his assessment fully. Heinz K. Becker MEP, stressed disillusioned that "never before has it been so clear that the police, intelligence agencies and justice system" of the 28 EU member states "are not working together closely enough". Becker is a Vice-president of the ESU and the spokesperson for security of the ÖVP in the EU Parliament. Messages of compassion for the victims and their families, and for the whole people of Belgium, have been received from many countries at the ESU headquarters and by the "SI" editor. They bear witness to the great consternation and deeply-felt sympathy among the family of the European Seniors' Union.

Pope Francis condemned the terrorist attacks in Brussels with the words: "this was a gesture of war, from people who do not want to live in peace". Above all, the arms dealers are to blame for the terror. On Maundy Thursday, after he had washed the feet of asylum-seekers from Mali, Nigeria, Eritrea and India – members of different religions – in the tradition of Jesus, he said: "we are all brothers, we are all children of the same God." He encouraged all citizens who are providing help to asylum-seekers. The situation of the stranded refugees in Idomeni was compared by the Pope to the distress of the people of Israel when they departed from Egypt.

The protestant **Bishop Bedford-Strohm** considers terrorist attacks as blasphemy. He sees a connection between terrorist attacks and Islam, since the assassins refer to the Koran; therefore he welcomes the fact that Islamic organisations have distanced themselves from the attacks in Brussels, explained the bishop, who is also chairman of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). The – at least partly effective – ceasefire in the Syrian civil war, as well as the show of solidarity of many citizens in a number of European countries are signs of hope.

The news now demands also for protest about the terrorist **attack in Pakistan** on Easter Sunday, which claimed over 70 dead and many injured, and which is credited to the account of the Taliban terrorist militia. Besides Christians, against whom the action was directed, Muslims also lost their lives. Pope Francis spoke once again of inhumane behaviour.

Integration: obligations and experience

With a new law, the German government wants to oblige asylum-seekers to accept offers for integration, such as language courses and employment. Government agencies also want to decide for themselves where refugees will be settled. According to **Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière**, financial assistance might be reduced in extreme cases by refusal.

At the last, seventh station of the ecumenical Good Friday procession in Berlin, Syrian refugee Jala Aldebes (*in the middle in our picture*) described his experience with integration. Within five months he has learned German under guidance, so that he is now able to talk in the language of his host.



Jala had withdrawn from conscription to the Assad army by fleeing; previously, he had supported opposition groups.

Culture connects and reconciles

The European Year of Culture 2016 – as reported – is celebrated in San Sebastian, Spain and Wrocław (Breslau), Poland.

The Events in San Sebastian (Donostia) should highlight especially the role of culture in the coexistence of the citizens, expressed the former mayor, Izagirre. So the preparation was laid on broad shoulders. The basis of all activities are values such as peace, coexistence, social participation, mutual respect and culture as a socially uniting instrument.

From 15th to 22nd April, the Human Rights (Film) Festival takes place, calling up solidarity, justice, equality and other desirable goals. The organiser is the Directorate of Youth and Education. (www.cineyderechoshumanos.com)

Wrocław will be, from 23rd April and for the next 12 months, the “UNESCO — World Book Capital City”. Highlights of the first day are the opening of a Pan Tadeusz Museum and readings of fragments of Shakespeare, who died 400 years ago (the year of his death is 1616). Writers and other artists from several countries are expected for a “European Literature Night”. “Pan Tadeusz” is the title of a national epic poem by Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855), which is the most read book in Poland after the Bible.

From 9th May, an exhibition about Cardinal Kominek will be shown, who entered into reconciliation in 1965 with his Letter to the German Catholic bishops. His words became famous: “We forgive and ask for forgiveness.”

Much support for Andreas Khol

Among all the candidates for the office of Austrian President, our friend Univ.- Prof. Dr. Andreas Khol (ÖVP and ÖSB), can count the majority of support statements for himself, announced his successor as chairman of the Austrian Seniors' Association (ÖSB), at Easter. “Khol is leading also with the entries to his Citizens Committee”, added Ingrid Korosec. The first round of voting will take place on 24th April. The ESU will accompany him with best wishes and keeps its fingers crossed for Andreas Khol.

Antonis Demetriades (CY) will be 80

For his “round” birthday on 18th April, the heartiest greetings and congratulations apply to the Vice-president from Cyprus. The jubilarian has proved himself – also as Chairman of the Cypriot Seniors’ Association – always as a good host for ESU-regional conferences of the Mediterranean countries. He took over the presidency of the national Association after the death of Thanos Michael. Antonis is one of the most eager supporters of the reunification of his country. The separation of “Northern Cyprus” under Turkish influence, and isolated internationally, must come to an end finally after 40 years, he stressed again recently in an interview with the Editor. So it is a matter of honour for Antonis that he has pursued diplomatic talks with great interest and hope since years. From time to time, he gives his friends in the ESU Praesidium high-quality information about the state of negotiations, that can be expected ultimately to solve the urgent problem with Ankara.



ESU Vice-president and head of the “Senior Citizens’ Organisation of Cyprus”

The coastal and port city of Larnaca is home to Antonis Demetriades, where there is one of the two international airports in the Republic of Cyprus (the other is in Paphos). His city is rich with places of interest. He likes to guide guests in a church that bears the name of Lazarus. It was built in the 9th century; it became known for woodcarvings from the Baroque period, among other things.

Get Well wishes to Riga

Dr. Guna Putnina, chairman of the Christian Democratic Seniors of Latvia, recently finished a prolonged hospital stay. The ESU and the Editor wish her a sincere speedy recovery and thank her for her greetings sent for the Easter feast.

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