



## *EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)*

*Newsletter SENIOR INTERNATIONAL No. 137 (English) 26<sup>th</sup> September 2016*

### **ESU- President: “bring gained years to life”**

On 1<sup>st</sup> October, the International Day of the Older Generation, the President of the European Seniors' Union, em Prof. Dr. An Hermans, requested that all member associations CELEBRATE this special event with their social partners!



*In the Brussels headquarters of the European People's Party (EPP), the European Seniors' Union also has established its office – the working place of President Hermans and Secretary Dumon*

That could give all who strive for “a growing old with dignity and without discrimination” – of central importance to the ESU - joy and strength. The situation of older people deserves attention at local, regional and international levels, and seniors themselves should **play a central role** with their needs, their creative will and their energy. In 2016 - writes the President - the priority demand of the ESU should be to emphasise “an inclusive, age-friendly society which is based on a positive attitude towards ageing and recognises the value of all ages”. Rising life expectancy has significance both for individual lifestyles and for all areas of policy. All are responsible for ensuring that the years gained will be given more life.

## In the service of human rights



Since its foundation in 2007 until today, the Cottbus Association Human Rights Centre (MRZ) (GER) fulfils its aim of arousing understanding and willingness to help those persecuted. Its Executive Chairman Sylvia Wähling, who is also director of the Penitentiary Memorial Cottbus, was highly delighted when Guido Hedemann, the chairman of the wind farm developer UKA, recently handed over a donation of 50,000 EURO. The money will be used for research and educational work. In this way, young people learn during their visits to the former penitentiary prison above all about conditions for political prisoners during the Nazi and SED dictatorship. Furthermore, they are confronted with current human rights violations such as in Iraqi Kurdistan. There, the director has repeatedly brought urgently needed food and aid. A part of the donated money will be used for the restoration of a prisoner transporter from GDR times ("BARKAS" model), whereby the inhuman handling of the prison inmates can be documented.

Another recognition for the MRZ will be on 11<sup>th</sup> October, with the awarding of the "Brandenburger Freedom Prize" in Brandenburg / Havel cathedral, which was recently donated to mark the cathedral's 850<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## Memorial stones for the Peace Centre

The chairman of the Polish Seniors' Union (PUS), Janusz Marszalek from Oświęcim, was deeply moved to receive two further memorial stones for the future Peace Centre in his city - from the capital of Latvia and from Mödling in Austria. They symbolize the solidarity of the donors with the victims of every political violence and urge the reconciliation of nations.

- (1) In the **Evangelical-Lutheran Cathedral in Riga**, the ceremony took place on 21<sup>st</sup> August in an ecumenical service in which the state President and other politicians, as well as church dignitaries and diplomats from several countries, participated.



*The Cathedral from 1211 is the archiepiscopal Cathedral of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Latvia, and has a magnificent organ and a 90 m high tower*

Archbishop and Metropolitan Zbignevs Stankevičs gave the sermon on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the state independence law and prayed for peace in the world. Janusz Marszalek, who is also a Vice-president of the ESU, and Dr. Guna Putnina, chairman of the Union of Christian Seniors in Latvia, received the memorial stone from the dean, Minister Elijs Godin and the Catholic priest Elvis Rudovics.

The Polish guests also had meetings with representatives of the Seniors Association who are to be thanked for their initiative for the ceremony. Along them was the ESU Executive Committee member Andrejs Rudzitis. At the same time they sounded out opportunities for cooperation. Further discussions were held with the Professor of Economics, Dr. Ivars Brivers of the University of Latvia, who will be also participating in Leuven at the ESU Congress, and with Peteris Samson, presidium member of the International Association of Former Political Prisoners and Victims of Communism.



*Photocall in the sanctuary. To the left of J. Marszalek (centre): Dr. Guna Putnina*

*Photos (2): A. Putnins*

On behalf of the mayor of the Europastadt Mödling near Vienna, resident Dr. h.c. Edeltraud Paul presented a memorial stone in early September. She was with others from Mödling - many of them seniors - on a "citizens journey" through Poland - with stops in Czestochowa ("Black Madonna" at Jasna Góra), Kraków, with its Basilica of St Mary, the Jewish quarter, the Wawel Royal Castle, and the salt mine in nearby Wieliczka (a UNESCO World Heritage site). The handover to Janusz Marszalek took place in Kraków in the presence of ESU Honorary President, Leif Halberg.

The tour group was particularly impressed by the visit to the extermination camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. What a contrast to the neighbouring Children's Village in Rajsko, a district of Oświęcim, which is managed by Marta and Janusz Marszalek since its foundation in 1994! Here, adolescents from difficult family situations are well taken care of and assisted. Their joy about the small gifts of the visitors from Austria brought the guests to tears.

In summary, the impressions of the trip described by Edeltraud Paul, who has long been engaged in the ESU - among other things as a (former) treasurer - are appreciated in a rhymed report at the end:

*"Actually, many among us have felt:*

*Even a small action is what brings Europe together;*

*A cooperation from person to person in small things*

*May also bring in great peace."*

## CDU Seniors' Union in Magdeburg

Once again, the Seniors' Union of the CDU (GER) holds its election congress ("16th Federal Delegates Assembly") in Magdeburg. It is the capital of the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt, with a history reaching back to the German early Middle Ages. In the Cathedral of Saints Catherine and Maurice (built between 1207 and 1363) are the remains of Otto the Great (Otto I), the first emperor of the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation", which ran from 962 until 1806. Otto lived 912-973.

Some time ago, archaeologists also succeeded in verifying the grave of his wife who died in 946 aged 36 years, Queen Edgitha, who came from England where she was known as "Aedgytha". Otto I and the mayor Otto von Guericke became the namesakes of the "Otto city of Magdeburg".

In the years 1944/45, the city on the Elbe was badly affected by heavy bombardment, in particular its cathedral. The church, substantially rebuilt in 1955, is considered the first completed cathedral in Germany in the Gothic style, in which Protestant sermons have been preached since 1567.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Election Congress of the Seniors' Union of the CDU in autumn 1992 took place under the impact of the unification of the two German states, that had been completed barely two years earlier. Delegates from East and West drew up and adopted on 22<sup>nd</sup> September the

### MAGDEBURGER DECLARATION

that emphasized:

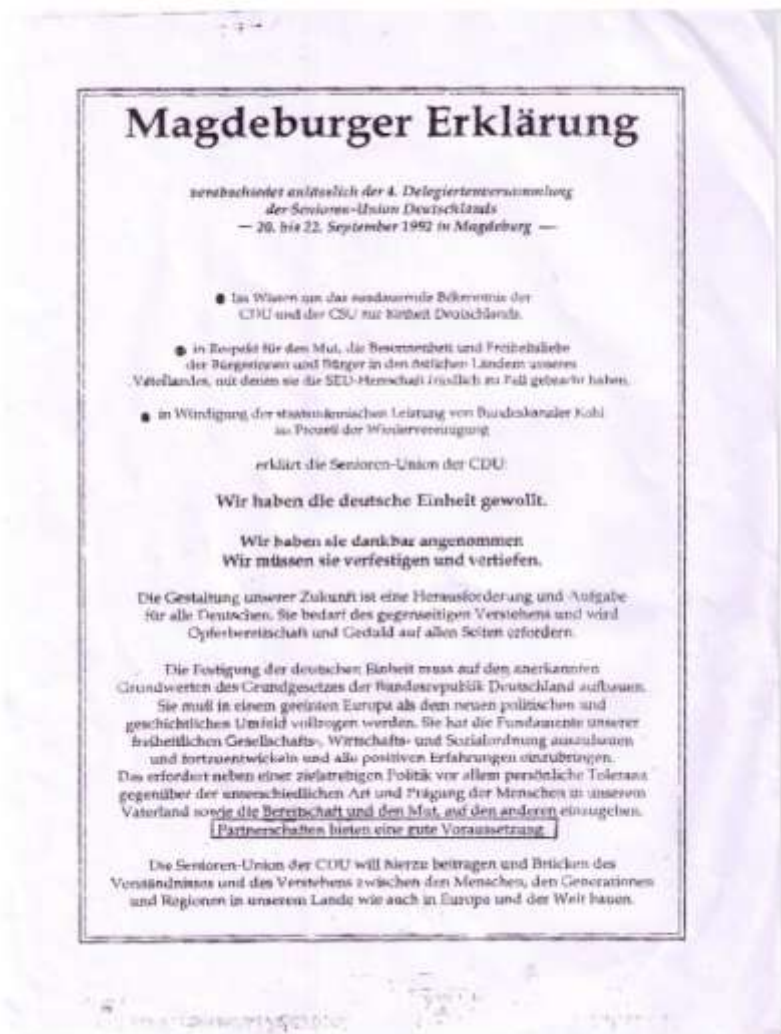
*"We have desired German unity. We have gratefully accepted it.*

*We must defend and strengthen it.*

*Partnerships offer a good precondition (for it)."*

In conclusion, it states:

*"The Seniors' Union of the CDU wants to contribute to this  
and build bridges of understanding and comprehension  
between peoples, generations and regions in our country  
as well as in Europe and the world."*



*From the Editor's archive. This paper made the rounds back then in the local groups of the Seniors' Union; it contributed to the positioning and encouraged political action.*

When delegates gather once more in Magdeburg on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> October this year, in addition to the elections to the governing bodies (board, chairman, vice-chairmen, treasurer, minutes writer and for the first time a representative of the members), there are several requests for a discussion about the internal structure. For the Federal Presidency Prof. Dr. Otto Wulff, who has held the post since 2002, is once again a candidate.

According to the wishes of some national associations, accepting people under 60 years old into the Seniors' Union as "contributory sustaining members" is to be debated. They would, however, remain without voting rights. "In special cases" it should be possible in future for membership also for interested applicants under 60 years old, including the right to vote.

The "main motion" introduced by the Board urges the CDU to develop a new party manifesto by 2018, which continues to develop the political priorities of seniors, taking up new topics and opening future political options. In this way, "the voices of the older generation (would be) introduced into politics and society," the pre-release text states.

The first conference day ends with a panel discussion about "Prospects for German-Russian relations in the European context", in which prominent politicians and scientists from both countries will participate. A highlight of the second day is expected to be a speech by the CDU chairman and Federal Chancellor, Angela Merkel.

## Current ESU events

21/22<sup>nd</sup> October in Ljubljana: 1<sup>st</sup> ESU Regional Conference in Slovenia, organised by the three ESU member-organisations in the country.

4/5<sup>th</sup> November in the main Flemish provincial and university city of Leuven (Belgium): ESU Election Congress with delegates from all member-associations in Europe

---

Editor: [ulrich.winz@web.de](mailto:ulrich.winz@web.de); Mobilitel.: 0174 175 60 50

*Translated by Margit Hawkes*

**ESU:** Rue de Commerce /Handelsstraat 19, 1000 Brussels ; Tel.: +32 23 09 28 66

Website: [http:// www.esu-epp.eu](http://www.esu-epp.eu); E-Mail: [esu@epp.eu](mailto:esu@epp.eu)

Facebook.com/esu.eu