



EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)

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“Europe's Demography - Challenge and Opportunity”

The EPP Group of the European Parliament held a workshop in Brussels on this subject, to which the President of the European Seniors' Union, em. Prof. Dr. An Hermans, was invited as a speaker. Before about 150 listeners, she committed herself to the awareness of the changed age pattern, which is characterised by a growing life expectancy of the citizens on the one hand and low birth rates on the other.

The resultant awareness would have to be translated into practical action, the speaker remarked. Challenges of demographic change could become an opportunity for society, especially for the regions and municipalities.

The event took place in cooperation with the European Committee of the Regions (CoR). It is the meeting of regional and municipal representatives of the EU.

ESU before its election Congress



After the first regional conference in Slovenia's capital, Ljubljana, on 21st and 22nd October (SI will report about this event in the next issue) ESu now is looking forward to the election Congress in Leuven, the Flemish provincial metropolis and university city near Brussels on 4th and 5th November. For the IX. Congress in its 21-year history, its leitmotif is: "Together for a Safe and Social Europe". With this, the European Seniors' Union follows its position as a bridge builder between the generations. Delegates from all its member Associations are expected.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (EP)

"A historic step"

The ratification of the Paris Convention on Climate Change by the European Parliament on 4th October is seen as an "historic step"; with the possibility of it now coming into force it will prove a good service for the preservation of creation. CO2 emissions should reduce global warming to 2, where possible to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared with 1990. The COP 22 World Climate Summit, planned for November in Marrakesh, is expected to usher in the implementation phase, that is the practical phase, of the unanimous decision.

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Currently, an agreement achieved on 15th October in Rwanda's capital, Kigali, has been signed by almost 200 states, with a gradual limitation of the contents of the greenhouse gas FKW by 80-85%. It is used in refrigerators and air-conditioning systems and is, according to expert opinion, 100 to 1,000 times worse than hydrocarbons (CO2). Next, from 2019 onwards, it will be expected in the industrialised countries.

Interrail tickets as a present?

Manfred Weber, Chairman of the EPP Group in the EP, pleaded in a debate that Inter-Rail tickets will be given to all those interested on their 18th birthday. This train ticket allows travel in more than 30 countries. It has great importance for learning about other countries and their citizens even at a young age. As many “youngsters” as possible should be able to explore Europe's beauty and diversity and to make new friends, according to Weber. The proposal must be discussed with other groups in the EP and the Commissions and be supported by the railway companies.

Magdeburg: CDU Seniors' Union holds its course

An overwhelming majority elected Prof. Dr. Otto Wulff as Chairman of the CDU Seniors' Union for a further two years on 6th October, at the 16th election Conference in Magdeburg (DE). His deputies are: Helga Hammer, Leonhard Kuckart, Claus Bernhold, Christa Toben, Heidi Exner and Wolfgang Börnsen. Ingo Hansen (Brandenburg) is to fill the newly created office of a “members’ representative” for the first time.

Prof. Wulff made a keynote speech on a number of current topics. He called for the Seniors’ Union to have “more co-responsibility and cooperation with the executive board at all levels of the (CDU) Party,” and a clearly recognizable presence in all the CDU parliamentary groups – right up to the European Parliament. “What we want is an equal partnership with the younger generation.” Instead of being called a “supported generation”, “we want to participate much more in political power, and we want to have our say.”

Wulff spoke passionately against the construction of new walls in and around Europe. He stands, as before, behind the decision of the German government in September 2015 to allow helpless people from the Budapest train station to enter the country without bureaucracy, spoke appreciatively of the services provided for their reception, registration, asylum treatment and integration since then and proposed a discussion on the reconstruction of the present refugee countries in which the need for well-educated young people is likely to be large. He expected that asylum seekers would respect our values and have the will to integrate. Citizens who oppose Israel's right to exist, or question its existence, deny themselves the right to asylum.

The CDU chairman and Federal Chancellor, Angela Merkel, made another inspiring speech to the delegates. She attested to the Seniors' Union as a valuable activity for society.

ÖSB: “With new momentum”

As reported in Issue 138, the Austrian Seniors' Association (ÖSB) now has new leadership officially. Over 90% of delegates voted for Ingrid Korosec at the Extraordinary Federal Seniors’ Day in Linz on 14th September. Her predecessor, Univ.-Prof. Dr. Andreas Khol, who led the ÖSB for ten years, had resigned from office in January because of his candidacy for the office of Federal President. He is now Honorary President of the ÖSB. Deputy Federal Presidents were elected: Gertraud Aubauer, Gregor Hammerl and Herbert Nowohradsky.

The delegates had to consider a main motion. Its motto: "With a new impetus into a good future". As the "most successful service organization for the older generation in the country, with its offers of advice, information, education, sport and travel", the ÖSB will continue to be "daily by the side of the people". In the chapter "We are Europe", we read that the elderly should be informed about the current situation - "from peacekeeping to economic power, to the cross-border fight against terrorism and crime, and many other areas of politics", particularly as "no country can manage alone".

"Clear rules for immigration" are, for the authors of the document: "the mutual protection of external borders, an immigration card like the Green Card in the USA, a clear distinction of refugees as opposed to migrants according to UN Conventions, the allocation of asylum seekers or a cost-transfer by non-acceptance, comprehensive integration programs."

In the sense of "subsidiarity", it is to be implemented. "The EU should take care of the big things (and) leave the small things to the people locally; Europe's interference in systems of social order is rejected."



Ingrid Korosec (centre in picture) with Marilies Flemming, a former Federal Minister, and ÖSB-General Secretary, Heinz K. Becker, Member of the European Parliament

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One third of traffic deaths belong to the older generation. Gertrude Aubauer, Vice-president of the Seniors' Union (ÖSB), and an elected representative in the National Council, wants to use this message from the Transport Association to make urgently needed improvements. Traffic planning must be more fair to seniors. These include wider footpaths, better-designed street crossings and crossroads, as well as sufficiently long green phases at traffic lights for pedestrians.

How is it after 40?

A long-term study that was presented in Berlin documented how 20,000 people perceive and experience the diversity and change of age over 40 (German Age Survey / DEAS). The interviews were

carried out by employees of the German Centre for Age Questions (DZA) in 1996, 2002, 2008 and 2014, and were financially supported by the Ministry for Families, which will use the results.



1st row from left: Age-researcher Prof. Dr. Ursula Lehr; Franz Franz Müntefering, President of BAGSO; Janusz Marszalek, Chairman of the Polish Seniors' Union (PUS) and an ESU Vice-president

Of interest to the interviewers was: the duration of planned occupation (*work*), housing in the second half of life, partnership and family, as well as the question of how to combine paid employment with caring for dependents. The results were presented and discussed with the public, together with the Federal Working Group of Seniors' Organizations (BAGSO). Also, senior politicians from Sweden, Poland and other European countries showed interest in the study by their participation, and used the forum for contacts and exchange of experiences. Janusz Marszalek intends to organise a merging of seniors' organizations in his home country using BAGSO as a model.

Contact: www.bagso.de and www.dza.de

News in Brief

EZA (European Centre for Workers' Questions): "Violence in the workplace is not a private matter" stated Secretary-General Sigrid Schraml in her newsletter. Rather, she sees it as a "question of corporate culture and dignified work"; it is a "task of management for executives in companies and trade unions". The EZA has observer status in the European Seniors' Union (ESU).

The German Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, awarded the "Brandenburg Peace Prize" to the association "**Human Rights Centre Cottbus**" (DE) in Brandenburg Cathedral (Havel). With this, the work achieved since 2007 in the "Memorial Center Zuchthaus Cottbus" is honoured. It is directed to the re-working of the history of this prison, bought in 2011 by former political prisoners who served their sentence here during the GDR era; but above all extensive educational work and assistance to the needy at local level is provided by visits to Iraqi Kurdistan.

“Fortunately, we are united– my European path” is the name of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation event, faithful to the motto and book title of Dr. Hans-Gert Pöttering, presenting the 2nd extended and updated edition by the former President of the European Parliament (until 2009).

Newly included are the EU's difficult relationship with Turkey, the role of Great Britain in a united Europe and the future development of our continent. Pöttering is the initiator of the “House of European History”, which is being developed by the European Parliament in Brussels at present. His book will be presented in Berlin on 18th October. The sales proceeds will be donated to the Eastern Europe relief organisation of the Catholic Church, “Renovabis”.

Congratulations to Claus Bernhold

Claus Bernhold from Öhringen (Baden-Württemberg/DE) recently completed his 80th year. Congratulations! The “birthday boy” belongs to the ESU Executive Committee. Several position papers bear his “mark”. As Press Officer for the CDU Seniors' Union, he provides up-to-date information and links to other relevant topics from the 56,000 member organization. The Editor of this Newsletter thanks him for his versatile support. Since Magdeburg, Bernhold is also one of the deputy federal presidents of the Seniors' Union (see above).

IMPRESSUM

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