



## EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)

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### Younger and Older in view

#### **Heinz K. Becker MEP again Vice-Chairman of Parliamentary committee**

The deputy, Heinz K. Becker, Vice-President of the ESU, has earned a respected recognition: he can continue his activity as Deputy Chairman in the Employment and Social Affairs Committee of the European Parliament.



Supported by the vote of his colleagues in the committee, he will, in his own words, place the great aspiration to a "social Europe" in the second half of the parliamentary term. His voters can be reassured that he will pursue his mandate with great seriousness and all his energy. After the re-election in January, he emphasised: "young people as well as older workers and seniors must be strengthened in their rights and opportunities".

Heinz K. Becker has been a member of the EP since 2011. He is General Secretary of the Austrian Seniors' Association (ÖSB) and the social spokesman of his party, the ÖVP, which is in a grand coalition with the Social Democrats.

As examples of his work in the European Parliament, Becker named at the ESU Executive Committee, at the beginning of February, the fixed targets as a concept of "European pillars", which are full employment and social progress, the improved situation of young people, a balance between work and leisure, qualification of older workers and social inclusion.

Although the EU does not have extensive legislative competence in the fields of health, care, prevention and active ageing, the exchange of experiences between the regions and member states, in collaboration with the EU Commission and the EU Parliament, could lead "to fascinating projects", according to Becker's blog. Last but not least, the approaching BREXIT demands decisions, especially as the 3 million workers in the UK who came from other countries can not be sure about their job prospects after the United Kingdom withdraws from the EU.

## AGE: ESU there from the beginning

### Honorary President Elisabeth Dispiaux-Cornil - our lady at AGE Platform Europe

As a “voice of older persons at EU level”, the AGE Platform Europe (AGE for short) describes itself confidently on its homepage ([info@age-platform.eu](mailto:info@age-platform.eu)) - as a “network of non-profit organizations of and for persons over 50”. Since the founding of AGE in January 2001, the European Seniors' Union (ESU) has been a full member, and Elisabeth Dispiaux-Cornil from Belgium - ESU Honorary President since 2013 - is one of our representatives.



*Elisabeth Dispiaux-Cornil (BE), middle in picture, in conversation with Vice-President Doz. Lidmila Nemcova (CZ) and Treasurer Etienne Vanderroost (BE). (Taken by: UW/Feb. 2017)*

In her report to the Executive Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> February, she gave an overview of prominent AGE activities. These include steps to implement the “European Pillar of Social Rights”, set up by EU Commission President Juncker, and the “Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing”. Many respectable activities happen at a local level, summed up Mrs Dispiaux-Cornil, and deserved support from all those responsible for social policy in the country.



This applies also to the effort to make a success of the “International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development”, launched by the UN in 2017. For this purpose, AGE works together with Project EuroSen = “Europe for Seniors”. A congress in Milan at the beginning of April will illustrate what part tourists play in the revival of larger and smaller towns. Older travellers will be there in focus.

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The International Tourism Exchange (ITB) in Berlin is also addressing this issue, which is of great economic importance.

# To be HUMAN – what an HONOUR!

## Thoughts from a lecture by Marc Eysken

Introduced by the ESU President, An Hermans, as an “academic, poet, painter and with everything he does: “a connoisseur””, the Belgian Minister of State Marc Eysken was presented to the Executive Committee and guests on 8<sup>th</sup> February as a lecturer and he displayed a lot of his own views, observations and ideas. Proceeding from the thesis that voters had “a vote, but not a voice”, he noted a “growing gap between knowledge and what is known”, from which he derived an “enormous ongoing demand for the education system”.



*Invited by em. Prof. Dr. An Hermans: Prof. Marc Eysken (Taken by: UW/Feb .2017)*

Climate change and the population explosion are a special challenge for him. In Europe the population share of our planet will decrease from 7 to 5 per cent. According to Prof. Eysken, the refugees coming to us “could be helpful when well-accompanied”. He pleaded for a precise distinction between refugees and asylum seekers and sees the danger of a “ghettoisation” of the migrants. His alternative plan is called “from multiculturalism to interculturalism” by observing universally valid values as established by the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

With the concept “a tsunami of inventions”, he describes the situation of our time. This sometimes leads to saying, instead of “before Christ/after Christ”, now “before PC/after PC”. Marc Eysken doubts the meaningfulness of a development from “Homo sapiens to Homo robotiens”; through a language computer in mini-format, he sees the importance of English as a world language on the retreat. At the end of his lecture, Prof. Eysken, looking around at the audience of his fascinated listeners, calming and at the same time encouraging: “it is an honour for us to be a member of the ‘association of humans’”. In this respect, everybody has the responsibility to preserve the creation and to contribute to the shaping of the future.

*Marc Eysken, born in 1933, is a professor at the Catholic University of Leuven, where he also once studied. He is a member of the CD&V party. In 1981, he was Prime Minister; he belonged to several governments as a minister, including for Foreign Affairs. In 1998, he was awarded the honorary title of Minister of State for life.*

# Peace and Reconciliation March in Iraq

**For that, everyone of good will is welcome in Holy Week**

The Human Rights Center (MRZ) in Cottbus and the International Society for Human Rights (IGFM), based in Frankfurt am Main, is calling participants for a peace and reconciliation march in Iraqi Kurdistan. It is to take place from Palm Sunday (9<sup>th</sup> April) to Easter Monday (17<sup>th</sup> April). The route is 130 km long. The march has been approved in writing by the government of the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan, says Sylvia Wähling of the MRZ. The participants book and pay their flight to Erbil themselves. A fee of 80 EURO per person per day will be levied, which will cover the local costs. The route starts in the Christian part of the capital Ainkawa and ends in the seventh century monastery of Rabban Hormizd, near the Christian city of Alqosh.

In the appeal it is said that an increasing number of ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq - especially Yazdi and Christians - have left the country from fear of further crimes by IS, and because of "many bad experiences with Islamic majority society, trust in Muslims" has gone. With the march and activities en route, a path to understanding and reconciliation shall be demonstrated.



*In the former penitentiary Cottbus, the MRZ maintains a memorial centre, in which all victims of political persecution between 1933 and 1989 are remembered. Janusz Marszalek from Poland visited it on the World Day of Peace in 2015, (our picture). In December 2015, the Coventry cross of nails was handed over to the Cottbus Human Rights Center.*

Invited to participate in the march was, among others, a delegation from the Polish Seniors' Union (PUS), chaired by J. Marszalek, who is also Vice-President of the European Seniors' Union. *Contact: Tel.: +49 (0) 355 290 133 0*

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## Prevent death from starvation!

**A famine of enormous proportions** is spreading in East African countries. Experts are talking about more than 20 million people. In Somalia alone, where 5 million inhabitants are on the run because of ongoing civil wars, 7,000 children will die if the community of nations does not provide short term extensive assistance. As a consequence of the drought, caused by the El Nino weather phenomenon, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya are also extremely affected.

**Antonio Tajani (IT)**, the new President of the European Parliament, has proposed a “Marshall Plan” for Africa to the EU, with which is helping to provide self-help through the provision of billions. The causes of fleeing should be combated locally.

**Minister Gerd Müller (DE)** has called for a global crisis fund to the extent of 10 billion EURO to finance short term aid projects in Africa. He is currently in discussion with government departments in Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast for additional opportunities for the local processing of food and enjoyable goods produced in the country, whereby jobs could be created and poverty counteracted.

The German Ministry for Development Aid is making 100 million EURO available this year.

## Plea for Lifelong Learning

The Bavarian Minister for Social Affairs, Emila Müller, said that further training for citizens at an advanced age is also a requirement for their civic commitment, in an interview with SENetz (1-2017). For this reason, the Seniors' Academy of Bavaria, which has trained more than 800 volunteer elderly citizens in 2016, has received special support. In order to avoid age-related poverty, “especially mothers who restrict their employment in favour of their children” should be better protected. The minister announced a conference in April at which the municipalities will present their policy concepts for seniors. Dr. Thomas Goppel, chairman of the CSU Seniors' Union, intends, according to SENetz, to make the “Security of the Citizens” a leading issue in this year's general election campaign.

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## ESU News in Brief

**The Annual Report of the ESU for 2016** is available on the ESU website in three languages (English, French, German) [www.esu@epp.eu](http://www.esu@epp.eu)

**The first ESU Regional Conference of the year** – from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> March in Prague – is dedicated to the topic “Quality of life for seniors” and will be held under the patronage of Cardinal Archbishop Dominik Duka.

**Elmar Brok MEP (DE)** has left the Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs; his successor is David McAllister. Brok will continue to stay close to the ESU and the Seniors' Union.

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