

## *EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)*

*Newsletter SENIOR INTERNATIONAL Issue No. 147 7<sup>th</sup> April 2017*

### Monument for Peace, Freedom, Humanity



Visitors to the Saxon city of DRESDEN were amazed by the fact that they were able to see these three erected buses. The reason for the occasion was clear only in discussion with the local people: the German-Syrian artist Manal Halbouni, a graduate of the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts, wanted to mark a sign for peace, freedom and humanity. He referred to a picture from Aleppo, which went through the media in 2015: wrecked buses, strung with ropes between houses, served the threatened residents as a makeshift road block. With his sculpture MONUMENT, he built a bridge between Aleppo and the once-destroyed Dresden, and even more: between the situation of the people in the Middle East and in Europe. The fact that the wrecks were posted next to the rebuilt Frauenkirche has increased the symbolic power of this spectacular memorial. It has left a lasting

effect on residents and guests - above all, their sympathy with the threatened citizens of Aleppo, Mosul, in the Eastern Ukraine and all over the world.

## ESU in Malta: variety of ideas to shape EUROPE !

### **Successful Conference on the sideline of the EPP Congress**

On the occasion of the EPP Congress in Malta, the ESU held on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017, a joint conference with the members of APAN (*Assoċjazzjoni Penjonanti Anzjani Nazzjonalisti*) to discuss “The Future of Europe”, the theme chosen for the EPP Congress. The President of APAN, Dr. Mario Riyyo Naudi M.D., welcomed President An Hermans and the 3 guest speakers: Herman Van Rompuy (former President of the EU Council), Roberta Metsola, MEP and Dr. Louis Galea (former Minister and former Member of the European Court of Auditors). The debate was moderated by Prof. Steven Van Hecke.

Mr. Van Rompuy stated that pessimism about the EU is exaggerated - statistics indicate an increased economic growth, creation of new jobs, limited migration and increase of democratic States. The EU is not only about economics but also about identity, security and shared values. Populism arises, he said, from inequalities within the EU, and protecting people and striking a balance between openness and protection is a key issue. Other challenges are: growing competition, lack of innovation, higher savings than investment, a growing ageing population, the digital revolution and climate change. The EU needs better higher education, Professionalism and more cooperation. Standing still is not an option - we have to deepen and strengthen the EU, with France and Germany taking the lead to achieve a Union of results.

Ms Metsola said people are disappointed by unfulfilled promises and belief in the EU must be recaptured. The EU project should not be taken for granted, but needs to be closer to people. Responsibility should be shared, geographical location and the dignity of people respected but immigrants must respect our values. Corruption must be combated and the rule of law must prevail.

Dr. Galea listed 3 priorities for the EU - engage with people, be more effective in the delivery of outcomes and improve genuine collaboration on all levels. Politicians should “appetise people for collaboration” to earn respect and trust. The EU must be defended “from the heart and address people’s expectations and hopes”. He quoted Monet: “people of the past cannot solve the problems of today” and emphasised that collaboration needs a spirit of good will between people and politicians.

In the discussion, moderated by Prof. Van Hecke, in answer to the question: where are we now, where are we going and who will take us there, the absence of visionary leadership in the EU was noted with regret. Leif Hallberg raised the issue of Turkey - although the agreement concerning immigrants had achieved stability, it is not perfect and a long-term solution requires trust on both sides. Gabriele Peus-Bispinck mentioned the “Pulse of Europe” taking place in 50 German cities. New technology may help meet future challenges, but a bridge needs to be built between old and young because of their different approach and attitude to new media. Dr. Galea said that young people are very positive about the EU - “it is already in their DNA” and many grew up without a national currency or borders. Finally, EU studies should be included in schools and universities to combat the constant negative media image (as in the UK).

## “Pulse of EUROPE” on the way to success



*Picture from a rally of the initiative: “Pulse of Europe” on the Berlin Gendarmenmarkt - for a young Polish woman, reconciliation between neighbouring countries is important. Others plead for love as a binding force in the European Union.*

*The anniversary of the “60 Years of the Rome Treaties” has many faces.*



## Solidarity with Belarus demonstrators

Once again the police in Belarus acted decisively against protesters. This affected also the leading personalities of the ESU partner organization “Nashe Pokalene/Our Generation”. According to information from Minsk, Valery Zhukin from Minsk and Pavel Levinov from Vitebsk had to receive medical treatment after their temporary arrest on 25<sup>th</sup> March. ESU President An Hermans conveyed the solidarity of the European Seniors' Union to the chairman, Tatyana Zelko. She wrote, among other things: “We are following the terrible news from your country. You are in our thoughts and prayers.” At the same time, she referred to the appeal of the EPP to the Lukashenko government to follow the legal requirements and to respect human rights.



*Tatjana Zelko (Minsk) (centre of picture) in 2015, with ESU partners from the Baltic in Vienna: from left: Ann Räämet (Estonia), Zibartas Jackunas (Lithuania) as well as Andrejs Rudzitis and Dr. Guna Putnina (Latvia)*

#### **Good decision**

Representatives of the opposition Christian Democrats of Belarus (BCD) were delighted about the decision of the European People's Party (EPP) to grant observers' status to their party. The decision was taken on 29<sup>th</sup> March in Malta and is regarded as a recognition and encouragement. The rigorous actions of the rulers also struck the vice-chairman of the party, Pavel Seviarynets, who had to spend 10 days in custody; his colleague, Vital Rymasheuski, will be taken to court for trial shortly. All the detainees report about the “inhuman conditions and humiliating behaviour”, the International Secretariat of the BCD said. The solidarity of the democratic world community, combined with unanimous, sharp protest against the government, is now more urgent than ever.

---

**Editor:** [ulrich.winz@web.de](mailto:ulrich.winz@web.de)

*translated by Margit and Seán Hawkes*

**ESU:** Rue de Commerce/Handelsstraat 10, 1000 Brussels; Tel.:+32 2309 2866; [Facebook.com/esu.eu](https://www.facebook.com/esu.eu);

Internet: [esu@epp.eu](mailto:esu@epp.eu); Twitter: [esu\\_epp](https://twitter.com/esu_epp)