



EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)

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Europe – our future

9th Summer Academy for Leading Seniors

Vienna (30th June - 2nd July). If proof was still needed that the EUROPEAN UNION is indispensable to the ESU and demands its full commitment, this year's Summer Academy would have delivered it! Already the newly elected President of the host Austrian Seniors' Association, **Dr. Ingrid Korosec**, in her welcoming address, she referred to this and to the final document of the most recent EPP Congress on the future of Europe and assured the support of her organization, which with more than 300 000 members, counts as one of the largest and most active in the ESU.



Ingrid Korosec welcoming the guests

This document – developed also with the participation of Marilies Flemming- conveys to citizens in clear language like no other before the awareness to live in a continent that is committed to peace, freedom, human rights and democracy and that the personal effort is worthwhile.



Prof. An Hermans (centre), Dr. Marilies Flemming and Secretary General Guido Dumon

Change for the better

President Prof. Dr. An Hermans stated in her introductory address “Changes in the public perception of the EU: “More and more citizens are aware that nationalism and populism bring no real answers and we have to work together,” she said. “Together we can find solutions to the problems of security, immigration, unemployment and climate change.”

In response to “ageing societies”, she expressed her satisfaction that the European People's Party, with its document from Malta entitled “Europe secures our future”, has given a place to demographic change and that the Congress has embarked on a general European strategy. This is also (or precisely for this reason!) important, because the competence for health care and social welfare lies with the EU member states. Prof. Hermans reiterated the involvement of our experienced representatives in the shaping of the European future.

A “European Spring” already ?

Other prominent speakers, such as **Dr. Werner Fasslabend** (Political Academy host) and Vice-president **Heinz K. Becker** MEP (both from Austria), **Elmar Brok** MEP (DE/per video), **Dr. Marilies Flemming** (former Federal Minister/Austria), **Dr. Vit Novotny** (Twice-married Center for European Studies/BE), **Igor Sekardi** (Federation of Austrian Industrialists) , and **Prof. Dr. Steven Van Hecke** (Cath. University of Leuven/BE) analysed the current international situation since the BREXIT decision and Trump’s coming into office on the one hand, and relief of the election results in Austria, the Netherlands and France on the other hand. They have provided information about the most recent decisions and partly surprising

agreements at European level and dared to forecast the next stage towards the stabilisation of Europe and its institutions.

The speeches conveyed the impression that confidence in the EU grew in the first half of the year, so that **Van Hecke** even spoke of a “European Spring” and entertained the expectation that there might be “a Macron summer”. According to **Heinz Becker**, more has happened in the area of “common defence” in the last few months than in previous years, which makes him optimistic.



Heinz K. Becker MEP during his lecture. His proposal from 2016 to help the poorest in Africa with a type of “Marshall Plan” like that after 1945 for the Germans, to bring help directly is now widely supported by politicians

Honours

President Hermans honoured the memory of the first honorary citizen of Europe, **Dr. Helmut Kohl**, whose advocacy for peace, freedom and reconciliation determine the task of the ESU. The guests paid tribute to the recently deceased Lithuanian seniors’ politician **Romualda Hofertiene**. The new chairman of the seniors in the Moderate Party of Sweden, **Margareta Palsson**, was welcomed. Prof. An Hermans marked out the former Vice-presidents **Jouni Mykkänen** (FI) and **Anton Bogataj** (in his absence /Peoples’ Party SLS), as well as the author of this report, with small gifts. She received an honour from the Slovenian People's Party, which was presented by its ESU Vice-president, Zwone Zinrajh.



Zwone Zinrajh (Slovenia) handed Hermans a greeting message from his party

Encouragement

The “country reports” submitted or read by representatives of the member organizations testify a wide range of activities in accordance with their own decisions and the Malta document of the EPP. The resulting exchange of views and experiences has once again underlined the high position of the Summer Academy. The participants expressed their applause at the announcement by the ESU President that it is the wish of the ESU and its partners - the EPP, the Austrian Seniors' Association, the Political Academy and the Martens Center – that such a meeting will take place in 2018. It provides knowledge, promotes the community of Europe's committed seniors' politicians, and encourages resolute and united action for the well-being of all citizens, summarised **An Hermans** after three strenuous and stimulating conference days in the “Springer-Schlössl” in Vienna-Meidling. She thanked the team of the ÖSB with Gertraud Pörtl, Edeltraud Paul and others for their prudent preparation and faultless execution.

“SI” will return to some speeches and country reports in the next Issue.

Family growth and cultural history

The Executive Committee meeting in Vienna followed the ESU Praesidium's proposal to give two organizations the status of observer: the Seniors' Association of Armenia and the Pensioners' Forum of Hungarians living in Serbia (Vojvodina).

The management committees evaluated the meetings and round tables held in Prague, Malta and Budapest as successful initiatives since the beginning of the year. They confirmed the schedule for the coming months as well as a preview of 2018.

Dr. Edeltraud Paul and the zither virtuoso **Stephan Ander** are to be thanked for giving an amusing “stroll through Viennese cultural history”, which presented Austria and its capital as a meeting place of the cultures and languages of South-Eastern Europe.

Helmut Kohl honoured

Prof. An Hermans characterised the “Chancellor of German Unity”, Helmut Kohl, who was buried on the opening day of the Summer Academy, as a “great statesman and great European, one of the founders of the European People's Party”. “We honour him by continuing his work for the unity of Europe, for freedom and democracy,” declared the ESU President. During the conference, several speakers referred to the legacy of Kohl, which had to be fulfilled by means of ideas. Prof. Dr. Wulff, Berlin, described him as a “founder and valuable promoter of the Seniors' Union”. Dr. Bernhard Worms, honorary chairman of the Senior Union, has lost a long-time loyal friend in Kohl.



*Romualda Hofertiene 2008 guest of the Senior - Union in Wiesbaden
Photo: C. Bernhold*

Romualda Hofertiene honoured

The recently deceased Lithuanian teacher and politician had, at the suggestion of Prof. Landsbergis in Vilnius at the beginning of the 2000s, launched the seniors' organization of the Fatherland Union with just three members. Over the years, groups have emerged in several cities in the country. Mrs. Hofertiene was one of the signatories of the Lithuanian Declaration of Independence in 1991. In 2008 – in keeping with their parties - the Seniors' Union of the Fatherland Union and the Christian Democrats, chaired by them for many years, were formed. Her deputy was Jonas Volungevicius.

Additional Reports

Czech Republic: Lidmila Nemcova at the Party Congress

The deputy-chair of the Czech Christian Seniors' (SKS), Lidmila Nemcova, demanded greater efforts in the dialogue between the generations at the KDU/CSL party congress in Prague, and campaigned among delegates to join their organization. In an interview with "PROGLAS", she explained the topicality of Catholic social teaching. A CD about the Prague ESU regional conference in March will be released soon, writes Mrs. Nemcova, who is also an ESU Vice-president.



Antonis Demetriades (Cyprus) and Elke Garczyk (DE/Bavaria) are organising the next regional conferences.

Cyprus: "Juniors Today - Seniors Tomorrow - Society Always"

This is what it says on the title page of a richly illustrated activity report, which Antonis Demetriades brought from Larnaka and distributed to the participants of the Summer Academy. The President of the Cypriot Seniors' Association and an ESU Vice-president expressed his satisfaction at the possibility of hosting once again an ESU regional conference (the 8th in the Mediterranean region) in the autumn of this year. It will have the theme "Technology and active Ageing". Lefkosia/Nicosia will invite seniors-politicians from Spain, Malta, Italy, Greece and members from its own country. (See "Calendar"). The expectations for a reunion of the country, split since 1974, have unfortunately been disappointed recently.

Lithuania: visit and hope for a regional conference

Under the impression of a trip to Lithuania, accompanied by Prof. Dr. Wulff (CDU Seniors' Union), Claus Bernhold (DE), a member of the Executive Committee, called for more attention to the Baltic States. The geo-strategic location and relevant experiences with their eastern neighbours speak for this. A long-awaited regional conference in Vilnius, Riga or Tallinn would be of great interest, added Zibartas Jackunas from Vilnius to the comments of Bernhold, who is also deputy chairman of the Seniors' Union.



*Zibartas Jackunas from Vilnius speaks about a regional conference in the Baltic States. -
A hearty "Welcome" to Margareta Palsson from Moderates Seniors (SE).*

South Tirol: "Fighting causes of escape!"

This demand comes top in a 10-point paper on refugee policy and integration, which the South Tyrolean People's Party produced on 27th June. It requests that the EU's external borders be safeguarded, asylum-seekers must be absorbed proportionally throughout Europe, and those who committed a criminal offence must leave the host country. According to ESU Vice-president Christine von Stefenelli, her SVP seniors movement agrees with these concerns. Everyone has the right to a dignified autumn of life, a statement by the seniors in preparation for the Summer Academy states. At events Mrs. von Stefenelli made the experience that Europe is perceived not so much as an economic community, but rather as a lifestyle. The meeting of the presidents of Italy and Austria on the 25th anniversary of the "dispute settlement" with regard to South Tirol is a good sign she said.

Sweden: UN conference on the rights of the elderly!

The Swedish Christian Seniors' (KD Seniors) expect their party to discuss this proposal at their congress in October and used the international contacts for the establishment of such a body. In addition, the Seniors' Association advocates the support of poor elderly citizens, especially widows. They require rent subsidies, better dental treatment, more care of the mentally afflicted, fitness programs and attention to a healthy diet. - In April, the Statutory Congress of the Seniors' Association, which has existed since 1993 and has 1,300 members, renewed its confidence in Leif Hallberg, an honorary president of the ESU, as chairman. Lars O. Molin and Maria Wilhelmson are with him as Vice-presidents. Antonella Pirrone is active as Secretary General since 2007.

Poland: Cooperation with BAGSO

On the occasion of a specialist conference of BASGO (German National Association of Senior's Organisations) on "International Policies for the Elderly" in Bonn on 27th June, Janusz Marszalek (Oświęcim/PL) presented a speech entitled "The Situation of Older People in Poland" and referred to the "Challenges and New Approaches". He was pleased to announce that the preparation of a cooperation agreement between three Polish organizations and initiatives and BAGSO is moving forward, and that the signing is expected to take place at an economic forum in Krynica in September. On the Polish side, the partners are: the Association of Seniors' Councils, the Association of Universities of the Third Age, and the Polish Seniors' Union (PUS), which was founded in 2010 - President: J. Marszalek, who is also an ESU Vice-president. The project is also supported by Sejm MP Malgorzata Zwiercan, in her capacity as chairman of the Seniors' Commission in Parliament.

Germany/Bavaria: "Dr. Gebhard-Glück-Medal in Gold"

This new award of the CSU Seniors' Union will be given annually from now on. The first recipient is Prof. Dr. Konrad Weckerle, who successfully managed the Association - currently 12,000 members - since several years. Currently, Dr. Thomas Goppel is at the head; his deputy is Elke Garczyk, ESU Vice-president, who is to thank this information. According to her, she regularly passes this Newsletter on to her friends.

Austria: Opportunities for "List Sebastian Kurz"

At the same time as the Summer Academy in Vienna, the Austrian People's Party (in future "New People's Party") held a conference in Linz, where Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz was elected as chairman with 98.7% of the valid votes. As Dr. Marilies Flemming reported shortly afterwards, in the event of his election as Chancellor (date: 15th October), "everything old, that people do not like any more, would be sent away." In the press, Kurz is quoted as stating his intention "to build a new Austria". He told the delegates "to help the children in Africa", to exclude dictators from receiving financial aid and, yes, also this - to seize the initiative to form a group "80+".

Ukraine: visa freedom in force

Since 11th June, Ukrainian citizens are allowed to travel without a visa to countries within the Schengen zone. The permit is granted for “tourist and business purposes” and is limited to 90 days per half-year. The European Parliament had endorsed the travel facilities in April 2016, after eight years of negotiations between the EU and Ukraine, with about 80 per cent of the voters approving. The EU Council of Ministers stated that the decision could be suspended in case of “serious issues” with regard to migration and security. (Source: PANORAMA 12.5.2017)

Germany: young and old together

According to Claus Bernhold, the CDU Seniors’ Union and Young Union agreed on a common position paper for the Bundestag election campaign (date: 24th September). With a board resolution of 23rd June, the Senior Union called on the leadership of the CDU to “involve the representatives of the elderly more closely in discussions about the future course of the Federal government”.

ESU -Calender

- 2017** 28-30th September: **Munich** (DE): “Security and Confidence- Borders of countries and of EU”
Org.: Elke Garczyk
- 13th October: **Lefkosia/Nicosia** (CY): Presidium meeting
13-15th October: **Lefkosia/Nicosia** (CY): “Technology and Active Ageing”
Org.: Antonios Demetriades
- 2018** 27-28th April: **Aachen** (DE): “Ageing in the Euroregion”
Org.: Dr. Gabriele Peus-Bispinck
- 7-8th May: **Oslo** (NO): “Intergenerational Solidarity”
Org.: Sverre Mauritzen
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