

EURPÄISCHE SENIOREN UNION (ESU) EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)

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With these greetings from Minsk, the President of the Seniors' Association "Our Generation" in Belarus, Tatjana Zelko, wishes all friends in the European Seniors' Union a Happy New Year.

Bulgaria's first EU Council Presidency

BULGARIA holds the EU Council Presidency since 1 January. It replaced Estonia and passes this function on to Austria on 1 July. As a result of the United Kingdom renouncing it, Bulgaria is six months ahead of the planned schedule. Bulgaria works closely as a "troika" with its predecessor and successor in this function.

Joseph Daul, President of the European People's Party (EPP), underlined at the start of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council: "the security of European citizens is our highest priority", which is also reflected in a "new era in the establishment of permanent structural cooperation" (PSC). This was agreed by the EU member states at the end of 2017.

Daul expressly welcomes Bulgaria's efforts to create a "perspective for the western Balkan states and cohesion of the region". Peace and prosperity are beneficial for the citizens living there as well as for the other Europeans. "And we must work together", he added emphatically. Of course, the countries of the region would also have to contribute "with their own efforts" to enforce legislation, fight corruption and reform the judiciary. Daul sees this as the prerequisite for economic development.



The logo of the Presidency



SGERB Chairman Nikolay Andreev



Bulgaria's capital Sofia

Bulgaria has been a NATO member since 2004 and an EU member since 2007; The Mediterranean neighbouring state has many cultural and natural attractions, but is sometimes referred to as the poorest country in the EU. The Republic of Bulgaria is ruled by a multi-party coalition. As a result of an early parliamentary election, since May last year the prime minister is again Boyko Borissov, chairman of the "Citizens for European Development" / GERB party. Ten years ago, he initiated the founding of the seniors' organization, SGERB in Sofia.

This Association has been headed since 2008 by retired ambassador Prof. Dr. Nikolay Andreev. He is also one of the ESU vice-presidents and announced a festive event in the capital on the occasion of the anniversary. Prof. Andreev is a committed member of an EPP working group that advises on the requests of interested parties to join the EPP. He recently explained to the ESU Presidium, with detailed examples, how conscientiously he worked.

The opening ceremony for the presidency, with Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, is scheduled for 11th January; on 17th May, an EU summit will be held in Sofia concerning the western Balkans

Prague: Change of leadership in the SKS

Dr. Václav Roubal becomes honorary chairman

At its General Assembly in November, the Czech Association of Christian Seniors / Czech Sdruzeni krestanskych senioru SKS appointed a new board. The previous vice-chair, Doz. Ing. Lidmila Nemcova CSc, who is also a vice president of the ESU, was elected as chair; her deputies are Ing. Karel Tomek and Jaroslav Hulák. The board also includes Stanislav Kodys, Dr. Dagmar Koutska, Irena Rivnácová and Pavel Urban. The long-standing chairman and a former ESU vice-president, jur. Václav Roubal, was appointed Honorary President of the SKS; He is also one of the vice-presidents of the Czech Seniors' Council / Rada senioru Republiky.



.Prague March 2017: Regional conference with ESU President Prof. Dr. Hermans; next to her is Václav Roubal and Ing. an Bartsosek, vice-chairman of the KDU/CSL, who is valued by the Seniors' Association as a "lawyer" for the interests of older citizens in the party.

Photo right: Doz. Ing. Lidmila Nemcova

Over the next three years, the Seniors' Association wants

- . to try out new working methods,
- . to open up more and more of Czech society,
- . to gain new members from the Catholic parishes and from the Christian Democratic Party KDU/CSL
- . to strengthen its presence in the media such as television, radio and the press, and
- . to intensify contacts with other countries, primarily Slovakia.

In this context, Lidmila Nemcova recalls the more than 100-year history of both countries, which ended in 1992 with the founding of Slovakia as an independent state. She hopes for some "good initiatives" with the partner association headed by Jozef Miklosko.

Currently, the new executive board, the "executive committee", will discuss cooperation with personalities from friendly organizations, members of the SKS clubs, party leaders, and from the Seniors' Council. On this occasion, the book "The active and independent senior" will be

presented. It was published by EAPN and the Ministry of Labour and also contains an article by the SKS chairperson.

After SKS participated in an EAPN congress in November, with a speech by Lidmila Nemcova on shaping the future of the digital age, the Christian Seniors' Association joined the "European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)" at the beginning of the new year, which is active at national, regional and local levels against poverty and social exclusion.

The improved SKS website <http://krestanstiseniori.cz/kontakty> lists events in Prague, but also in clubs in Brno and Zdár nad Sazávou.

Seniors' Union: Strengthening Rural Regions!

Berlin/Munich. The Seniors' Union of the **CDU**, with its 55,000 members, is concerned with the formation of a stable government. Already in October, it had supported the first soundings for a government program with expectations, hopes and suggestions. Referring to the voting behaviour of older citizens for the CDU/CSU in September, Prof. Dr. Otto Wulff requested special attention to the situation in the rural regions of Germany, where many older people live.

The fact that many, especially older and mobility-restricted inhabitants of villages and small towns feel "suspended" from inadequate infrastructure, has meanwhile also been addressed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel in her New Year message and declared to be one of her policy goals for 2018. In the election to the Bundestag in September, 40 percent of over-sixty year-olds had voted in favour of the CDU/CSU, which corresponds to an increase of 7 percent compared to the overall result of both parties.



Dr. Thomas Goppel



Prof. Dr. Otto Wulff

The Seniors' Union of the CSU in Bavaria, with its 12,000 members, demands that there should be "a comprehensive concept for hospitals and general practitioners, that is medical care in the country and everywhere", as their chairman, Dr. Thomas Goppel MdL, writes in the membership express-letter from December. Furthermore, "investment in infrastructure", which strengthen local public transport and include the expansion of broadband, are crucial. "The right to mobility applies to all," it says in summing up.

The European Capitals of Culture 2018 ...

... are Valletta (Malta) and Leuwarden with Friesland (Netherlands)

Valletta is the capital of the Maltese archipelago consisting of Malta, Gozo, Comino and the islands of Cominotto, Ilfla and St. Paul's Islands. Valletta's Mayor, Alexiei Dingli, likes to say that "Valletta was a kind of predecessor of the European Union – as early as 450 years ago. A model for different people, cultures and religions living, working and achieving something productive together. This is ... important for the whole of Europe. The honour of European Capital of Culture applies not only to Valletta, but to all of Malta, including Gozo, Malta's second largest island," Dingli added.

Valletta has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1980. It has a population of 6,000 of the total of 430,000 in the archipelago. Its geographic location has always attracted many people.

On his journey to Rome the Apostle Paul was shipwrecked in Malta, where he survived a snake bite and healed many sick people. The Acts of the Apostles by Luke give a very vivid account of this in chapters 27 and 28.

The archipelago is also famous for its unique prehistoric temples and tombs.

Thus, the inhabitants built the first free-standing stone temples between 4000 and 2500 BC., which belong to the main attractions next to the Archaeological Museum and St. John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta, The archipelago was further shaped by the Order of St. John. Probably the most beautiful building of a capital city rich in monuments is the Auberge (hostel) de Castille, whose façade is shown in our photo from 2010. This is the seat of the prime minister, currently Joseph Muscat.



Auberge de Castille

At that time, eight years ago, Valletta hosted the first ESU regional conference of the Mediterranean neighbouring states, at which Maria Kanellopoulou made a moving speech. The organiser was the Seniors' Association APAN (Assocjazzjoni Penjsonanti Anzjani Nazzjonalisti), led by Alfred Scerri. Today, Dr. Mario Rizzo Naudi MD is at the head of the organization. Malta is the smallest EU country; it has belonged to NATO since 2004, to the EU since 2007.



In 2010, APAN hosted an ESU Regional Conference for the first time. The invitation of its chairman, Alfred Scerri (11th from left), was next to friends from Cyprus, Greece and Italy, as well as prime minister Laurence Gonzi of the Nationalists (centre in picture). To his left is APAN secretary Antoinette Vella, to the right of the PM the now honorary president of the ESU, Maria Kanellopoulou (GR), and the then ESU vice-president, Carlo Fatuzzo (It).

(According to information from Lina Caruana, International Secretary of APAN)

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The Dutch city LEUWARDEN with the FRIESLAND is the second European Capital of Culture 2018. It will be presented in the next issue of the newsletter.

Mourning for Pol Marck

Belgium. ESU President Prof. Dr. An Hermans was notified of the death of former ESU vice-president Pol Marck. He was born on 6th December 1930 and fell asleep peacefully on 21st November 2017. The European Seniors' Union holds an honourable memory of him. For his social commitment - also as a member of the European Parliament - Marck was honoured many times. He was Officier de l'ordre du Mérite Agricole de la République Française. On the 29th of November, Pol Marck was laid to rest.

ESU Diary 2018

- 19-20 April: Stockholm (SE): 20th anniversary of the Christian-Democratic Seniors' Association
- 23rd April: Brussels: Presidium
- 24th April: Brussels: Conference with the Youth EPP (YEPP) for the European Day of Solidarity between the Generations
- 24th April: Brussels: Executive Committee
- 27th 28th April: Aachen (DE): Regional Conference. Topic: "Growing Old in the Euro-region"
- 7th - 8th May: (not , as reported in No. 154, 8.-9.May!):**
Oslo (NO): Regional Conference. Topic: "Solidarity between the Generations"
- 17th -19th May: Vilnius (LT): Regional Conference. Topic: "Bridges to Solidarity and Cohesion in the Baltic States"
- 6th July: Vienna (AT) Presidium
Executive Committee
Anniversary "10th Summer Academy for Leaders"
- 7th - 9th July: Vienna: 10th Summer Academy
- 6th - 8th September: Bozen (Italy/ South Tirol): Regional Conference
- 7th - 8th November: Helsinki (FIN): EPP Congress with ESU participation
- 23rd - 24th November: Leuven (B): Presidium

Additional Events of Member Associations

- 20th April: Berlin (D): "30 Years of the CDU-Senioren-Union"
- no date yet: Sofia (BG) "10 Years of SGERB" (Seniors' Association of the GREB party)

IMPRESSUM

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