



## *EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)*

*ESU-Newsletter SENIOR INTERNATIONAL No. 156 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018*

### *A word from the President*

*Em. Prof. Dr. An Hermans (Belgium): the victims urge us to **peace***

At the start of the New Year, I sincerely wish you good health, happiness and togetherness. May each of you find the strength and resilience to build hopeful perspectives. One of those perspectives is called Europe, and each day we have to collect the building blocks to save and share peace, security and prosperity. I thank you because you also cooperate in our Association, the ESU, on this European project.

2018 is an important year. The challenges and priorities are set. The EU Commission hopes to deliver on the reform of the Economic and Monetary Union, secure the EU's borders, overhaul the EU's asylum system, get back to Schengen, complete the Digital Single Market, and bring the Western Balkans closer to the Union.



*April 2014: An Hermans (3<sup>rd</sup> from left) and other participants of the Regional Conference visited the Nazi extermination camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau (Poland)*

## Winning back trust

However, citizens are not only waiting for institutional reforms, they need a more united, stronger and democratic Union that feels like a reliable place in which they feel protected and secured. Only then, confidence can return and the 2019 European elections can be presented as a gate towards new opportunities and reconnection with citizens.

Let us also keep in mind that Europe was built as a hopeful peace project, after so many had suffered from war, oppression, discrimination.... Let us be thankful for the heroes who believed in justice, peace and democracy and worked for it.

### “Never forget!”

It is important to commemorate the victims and always remember their struggle. Across borders, the UN launched on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2005, the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. They called for education programs and active citizenship for peace and tolerance. Every year we commemorate the victims and make promises ‘never to forget’. Also today, the remembrance of war and oppression and the brave acts of leaders and citizens stimulate us to work for peace. Let us share the hopeful perspective that our children and grandchildren and all future generations will live in peace and freedom.



*April 2014: Janusz Marszalek, President of the Polish Seniors' Union (5<sup>th</sup> from left), accompanied his guests, some of whom were confronted for the first time with the crimes of National Socialism on site - in Auschwitz/Oświęcim. Alone here, 1.1 million Jews died.*



*Mechelen in Belgium: the inner courtyard of the Kazerne Dossin, where after the occupation of the country by the German Wehrmacht, Jews as well as Sinti and Roma were “collected” before they were taken to Nazi extermination camps in Auschwitz and other locations. The building is named after a World War I officer who was honoured as a hero in October 1914 for his committent in the Battle of Yser. Meanwhile, here and in an adjacent new building (opened in 2012), places of remembrance and memorial were established.*

## In memory of the victims of violence

In Germany, where on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1933, therefore 85 years ago with the seizure of power by the NSDAP, the reign of terror began, on 27<sup>th</sup> January the victims of the National Socialist persecution policy and violent crimes were commemorated in many locations. In the Catholic church in Bitterfeld (Saxony-Anhalt), the pastors of the Catholic and the Protestant congregations have been inviting people for ecumenical prayer as they have done since 1997. In the Friedrichstadtkirche in Berlin, located not far from the former Nazi centre of power, the Action Reconciliation Service for Peace urged involvement in protecting worldwide human rights. Preachers Aline Seel and Dr. Christian Staffa prayed for all who, despite German guilt, are ready for reconciliation and friendship.

The chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany received much support for suggesting that a visit to a former concentration camp (KZ) should be made mandatory for every student.





*In Gębice, formerly Amtitz (voivodship Lubusz, Poland), one is reminded of the first internment camps of the Nazis after the beginning of the war in 1939, where also Father Maximilian Kolbe was temporarily imprisoned (picture left). In the grounds of the Zuchthaus Cottbus (DE) memorial site, a former political prisoner from the GDR time created a memorial for the dead at the Berlin Wall. In Cottbus, political prisoners of both German dictatorships were confined.*

### ***Israel: “Terrorist attacks prevented”***

**Israel's prime minister informed NATO ambassadors on 9th January that intelligence agencies in the country, by the provision of information, prevented “dozens of major terrorist attacks, many in European countries. Some of them could have even major attacks - like the worst they have experienced on European soil, and even more devastating,” Benjamin Netanyahu added. He took the opportunity to warn about the dangers to security posed by radical Sunnis and Shiites, and praised NATO as an “alliance of democrats” that share common values.**

### **EUROPE is worth the commitment**

A symposium in honour of Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer, who received honorary doctorates 60 years ago, became a commitment to a united Europe. In the Catholic University of Leuven (BE), EPP President Joseph Daul made a moving speech. ESU President An Hermans emphasised that the majority of civil society, and especially older people, are positive of Europe being the guarantor of security. It is worthwhile to campaign for peace, prosperity and integration despite all the problems. The meeting also recognised the growing importance of the cooperation between France and Germany in the present and in the future.

*Living up to its name ...*



*is the shopping centre "Europa Center" in Berlin-Charlottenburg at the turn of the year, with an exhibition of sights from the major European cities such as London and Athens.*

*Only a few steps further, at the Gedächtniskirche, a year after the terrorist attack on the Christmas market, many Berliners and guests pause in memory of the victims and their relatives.*



*Here are flowers from the European Seniors' Union also*



## Leeuwarden - European Capital of Culture

The city of Leeuwarden, in the north of the Netherlands, is the European Capital of Culture 2018, together with Valletta (Malta, see Issue No. 155). The 18 Frisian villages and smaller settlements belonging to the city, with its 95,000 inhabitants, are also included in the appraisal and the festival programme. Leeuwarden is the administrative seat of the province of Friesland. The cityscape is characterised by many narrow town houses of the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century. Among the attractions are the world's largest and most intact steam pumping station Woudagemaal (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), the "Friesmuseum" with a considerable silver collection, and the "Princessehof" with a ceramics museum. The "Verzetsmuseum" documents the resistance against the Nazis during World War II. On "Ascension Day" (10<sup>th</sup> May), the "world's largest flower market" will be an astonishing sight.

## National Congress of the CSV-Seniors in Luxemburg

On January 27, the ESU member-association CSV-Seniors held a congress in Letzebuerg / Luxembourg. Opened by chairman Marcel Glesener, there was an "administrative part". Afterwards, Claude Wiseler gave a lecture on "Secure Pensions". On the invitation, which was sent to us by the vice-chair of the CSV-Seniors, Clode Carbon-Frisch, were also the names of three MEPs: Vivian Reding, Georges Bach and Frank Engel, who were to speak about their "commitment in Europe and for Luxembourg" (we will return to this event in the next issue).

## ESU Diary 2018

19-20 April: Stockholm (S): 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christian-Democratic Seniors' Association

20<sup>th</sup> April: Berlin (D): Official celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Seniors-Union of the CDU

### **24<sup>th</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> April (please note: change of date)**

**24<sup>th</sup> April: Brussels: Presidium**

**24<sup>th</sup> April: Brussels: Conference with the Youth EPP (YEPP) for the European Day of Solidarity between the Generations (which is held on 29<sup>th</sup> April)**

**25<sup>th</sup> April: Brussels: Executive Committee**

27<sup>th</sup> 28<sup>th</sup> April: Aachen (DE): Regional Conference. Topic: "Growing Old in the Euro-region"

**7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> May: (not , as reported in No. 154, 8.-9.May!):**

Oslo (NO): Regional Conference. Topic: "Solidarity between the Generations"

17<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> May: Vilnius (LT): Regional Conference. Topic: "Bridges to Solidarity and Cohesion in the Baltic States"

6<sup>th</sup> July: Vienna (AT) Presidium  
Executive Committee  
Anniversary “10<sup>th</sup> Summer Academy for Leaders”  
7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> July: Vienna: 10<sup>th</sup> Summer Academy  
6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> September: Bozen (Italy/ South Tirol): Regional Conference  
7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> November: Helsinki (FIN): EPP Congress with ESU participation  
23<sup>rd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> November: Leuven (B): Presidium

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

*Translated by Margit & Seán Hawkes*

**ESU: Rue de Commerce/Handelsstraat 10, 1000 Brussels; Tel.: +32 2309 2866;**  
**Internet (Website): [www.esu-epp.eu](http://www.esu-epp.eu); E-Mail: [esu@epp.eu](mailto:esu@epp.eu); Facebook.com/esu.eu.**  
**Editorial deadline: 27<sup>th</sup> January; published: 29<sup>th</sup> January**