



EUROPÄISCHE SENIOREN UNION (ESU)

EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)

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Young and old travel together

Ten years of the “European Day of Generational Solidarity”

Brussels. The idea to dedicate a special day to the dialogue and solidarity between the generations came in 2008 from a conference in Brdo (Slovenia). It has been a reality in Europe since ten years. Around 29th April, events take place in many places, assessing and developing new ideas. The European Seniors' Union took the anniversary on 24th April to use the occasion...



As a guest of the ESU Praesidium: Joseph Daul, President of the European People's Party EPP (2nd from right), with the ESU President An Hermans (r), the former President Dr. Bernhard Worms and (l) Vice-President Elke Garczyk, CSU-Senioren-Union (Bavaria/DE).

... for the **presentation of a position paper**, prepared with the Youth of the European People's Party (YEPP), and in the presence of EPP President Joseph Daul presented to the ESU Praesidium by Prof. An Hermans (ESU) and Andriano Giannou, YEPP Chair; furthermore,

... for the **organisation of a symposium** in collaboration with IDEA, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.



President Daul during his speech, which was also followed closely by A. Giannou (l).

The ESU-YEPP statement is entitled “Bridging the Gap” and is aimed at identifying our continent with every generation. Consequently, the subtitle is “A Common Vision for Europe Across the Generations”. In the introduction it states: the purpose of the annual theme day is to understand and promote intergenerational solidarity as a “cornerstone” to shape society.

EPP President Joseph Daul, who delivered a wide-ranging speech to the Praesidium, thanked the Seniors' and Youth organisations for this Declaration, expressing the expectation that the “concrete and useful proposals for young and old contained in it will be implemented as soon as possible”. This initiative helps to promote the renewal of the whole of society and for all ages. The President emphasised that the EPP family has answers to the questions of our time and needs to explain them to the European Parliament voters. *(The significant speech in French is being translated into other languages by the ESU, announced the ESU President).*

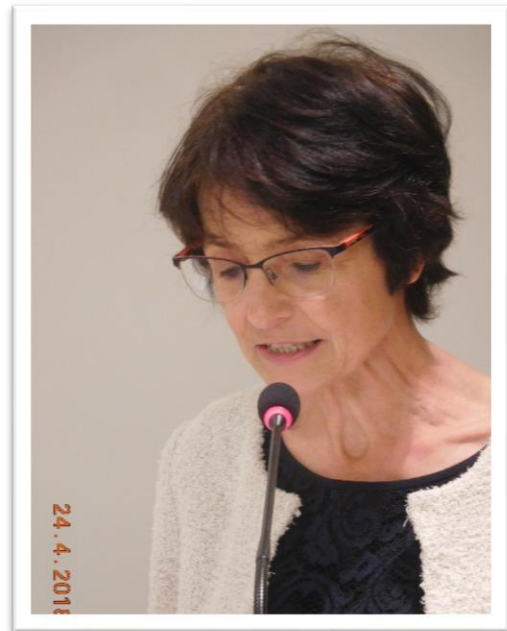
Addressing this challenge, the EPP Vice-President and Campaign Director / Election Manager **Dora Murphy** advocated “telling people what we want to do for everyone in the future, namely: to strengthen external and internal security and social performance through a successful strong economic foundation.” As one of its recent successes, he counts the cohesion in the face of the threat to the EU by the BREXIT declaration. Murphy sees the EPP as “a representative of the people”, which relies on cooperation between genders, generations and communities.

ESU President An Hermans, welcoming the Symposium participants, spoke about the history of the European Day of Solidarity between the Generations, describing the “European Pillar of Social Rights”, published in 2017, as a new compass for our social engagement.

What brings us together is the common interest in shaping the future; it must be an inclusive, sustainable society in which the solidarity in the behaviour between the generations is more in focus. Changing birth rates and new family structures require new considerations and decisions based on the active participation of old and young.



Andrianos Giannou in the discussion



Marianne Thyssen during her speech

For **EU Commissioner Marianne Thyssen** – responsible for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion – the future of youth is the top priority. Nobody should be left behind, especially as there is a danger that adolescents will become the victims of false political “friends”. The right to education must be accompanied by the willingness for lifelong learning. The Commissioner explained the importance of the “European pillars...” adopted last autumn, which “made European history”. The regulations meet the different needs and requirements of citizens who are able and willing to work. The Commissioner advocates the further development of pension regulations, introduced in some countries, into “sustainable pension systems”. She noted with satisfaction that the proportion of older workers has increased by 5 per cent since 2011. However, the stated goal of 2020 has not yet been reached and requires increased efforts by governments. Looking back at the Second World War and the successful reconstruction, the Commissioner noted: just as then, the current challenges can only be countered with the cooperation of states and generations.

Later in the event, moderated by IDEA Director **Andrew Bradley**, a variety of experiences with the “European Dialogue for Democracy and Solidarity between the Generations” were discussed. After **Tom Vandenkendelaere**, MEP, who introduced the topic, **Julia Krebs** (European Students’ Forum), with experience as an electoral Observer in several countries, took the floor.



View of the meeting room in the Kartuizercenter in Brussels

She argued for the introduction of “civic education” as a school subject and presented the new “European Citizens’ Initiative”. Lifelong learning and public meetings would help bring young people to the polls, according to the young woman.

Mathilde Poncelet (JA Europe) participated in a survey of young people in 9 countries on the subject of their interest in Europe. The results did not satisfy her and could be improved, in her opinion, through continuous discussions with corporate representatives.

Alec de Laminne de Bex and Julie Bodson (both from “Duo for Jobs”), vividly described how efforts to get migrants into work can pay off. The one – over 60 – sees in this activity “the best investment” of his life. The other, a younger woman, says that there are offices for “Duo for Jobs” in four Belgian cities, and 75 percent of their “clients” have been placed in employment; the rest went into training or an internship.



On the Podium from left to right: Julie Bodson, Alec de Laminne de Bex, Mathilde Poncelet, Julia Krebs, Tom Vandenkendelaere and Andrew Bradley

Once again referring to this year's "Day of Generational Solidarity"



Anne – Sophie Parent

(General Secretary of AGE Platform Europe) concluded the meeting with a remarkable event. She gave an insight into the probable course of 29th April in her family, which should be with the birthday party of their twin grandchildren on a farm and the visit of their own parents quite "in the spirit of the inventor".

30 years of the CDU Seniors' Union

Celebration with prominent guest speakers

Prof. Dr. Otto Wulff received the Konrad Adenauer Gold Medal

Berlin. Founded on this day exactly 30 years ago in Bonn, the CDU Seniors' Union celebrated its anniversary on 20th April in the presence of numerous members and guests of honour.

Prof. Dr. Otto Wulff, who has been chairman since 2002, received the Konrad Adenauer Medal from the hands of CDU Secretary-General, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer. According to the laudator, vice chairman Leonhard Kuckart, he was unique and probably also "made of something special", namely made of gold. Thereby, the organisation, which currently has 55,000 members, recognises the many-faceted dedication of its leader, who is not only a country-wide speaker in campaigning but also encourages his audience to undertake political action.

The CDU Secretary-General described the Seniors' Union as "good luck for the CDU," of which is also expected to receive a "historic admonition" on such festive occasions. With this expectation she should not be disappointed in the course of the ceremony.

The history of the anniversary

Already in the third year of its existence in West Germany and Berlin (West), the Seniors' Union had grown: at the beginning of December 1990, the state associations of East Germany and the reunited Berlin, which were founded during the year, met in the Bonn Union halls. Thus, the all-German Federal Association – with the exception of Bavaria – was launched. In his speech, Otto Wulf remembered Gerhard Braun as the first chairman (1988 – 1990), and thanked the attendant Dr. Bernhard Worms, his predecessor in the years 1990 - 2002, for his pioneering work. Worms is Honorary Chairman of the Seniors' Union and was President of the ESU from 2001 to 2013.

In Bavaria, the Seniors' Union was founded in 1999 as an associated group of the Christian Social Union (CSU), currently under the chairmanship of Thomas Goppel, and has more than 12,000 members. Since the founding of the European Seniors' Union (ESU) in 1995, both associations have been members and have vice-presidents in its managing body – currently Gabriele Peus-Bispinck (Münster) and Elke Garczyk (Prien) - as well as members in the Executive Committee.

In view of the occasion of the jubilee, ESU President An Hermans told the Praesidium in Brussels on 24th April that the Jubilee was an asset to the European Seniors', which provided a lot of impetus and further proposals for joint work between old and young.

Ceremonial address by the Chairman

In his speech, the federal chairman demanded a greater say in politics for the elderly. Wulff campaigned for a generation-spanning solidarity in which the elderly are equal partners with the young to shape politics together. "They do not want a seniors' policy, nor do they want a seniors' republic," he said in front of 300 guests in the Konrad-Adenauer-Haus. However, the seniors also did not want to be pushed aside as a sheltered generation, but to participate in political power and in how the young have their say. "After all, without the elderly there is also no vote to win," emphasised the chairman.

Prof. Wulff appealed to the other Associations of the CDU to subordinate the representation of interests to common politics. This should be shaped by the Christian understanding of social cohesion, the primacy of freedom and the personal responsibility of the individual. The CDU must be more than the sum of its parts; Wulff rejected absolutely a conflict of the various factional interests. In view of the demographic development and their greater life experience, older people have an especially high degree of responsibility in shaping the future.

Wulff recalled that the founding members of the Union (CDU) after the Second World War were usually older citizens who had put their lives on the line by resisting the Nazi terror for human rights. Therefore, the Seniors' Union will always be an admonisher and safe-guarder of freedom and human dignity, he stressed. "As the generation of remembrance", it remains above all others the task of preserving the tradition of the Christian People's Party. This is also another reason why seniors feel called on to support European unity like no other age group.

Rabbi Dr. Tovia Ben-Chorin (St. Gallen)

recalled in his speech that age already stood for experience in the biblical tradition. With the statement, “a society that does not honour its elderly will break apart,” Ben-Chorin referred to the Ten Commandments, especially the Fourth Commandment (“You shall honour your father and mother...”). The future needs experience,” the theologian concluded, but this principle also applies the other way around. Ben-Chorin used to be known as “a liberal rabbi for six years at the Berlin Synagogue Pestalozzistraße in Berlin”.

Dr. Wolfgang Schüssel (Austria)

emphasised the special role of seniors in advocating a common Europe. “Europe is a mission and a destiny at the same time”. The former Austrian Chancellor (ÖVP member) was in favour of raising the awareness of Europe and putting our continent on its own feet. In addition to securing peace and prosperity, the stability of the EURO is also high on the agenda of the EU.

There would be enough examples for the EU to work successfully, which of course would need to be better communicated. For example, for the first time since the introduction of the single currency, all member states have fulfilled the deficit criteria and achieved economic growth of 2.5 percent on average. Tens of thousands of new jobs have been created and life expectancy has continued to rise. The alleviation of poverty is successful, according to Schüssel, and: “we live in the best years of human history, which does not mean that everything is going well.” Schüssel counters the dangers of populists and nationalists: “There are still robust democracies” and comes to the conclusion: “We do not defend ourselves enough.” For new EU members, solidarity payments to the extent of 400 billion EURO were made. With Macron, he is of the opinion that “Europe protects”. If the French president offers “common foreign and defence policy”, yes: such demands, one should “immediately seize the opportunity”. The European identity must be strengthened. For this purpose, “a singable text for the European anthem” could be adopted, said Schüssel – and this with all due respect to Schiller’s “Ode to Joy”.

“Inclusion from the beginning...” with action to secure the rights of the disabled

“Inclusion from the beginning” is this year’s motto of the European Day of Protest for Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities. It addresses those politicians at all levels who do not take the rights of handicapped citizens seriously enough. Through actions on 5th May, many people will be made aware of their limitations in everyday life. In the Brandenburg city of Cottbus there is a special offer for the disabled on this day. They can experience a special tour of the “Memorial Prison Cottbus” in an exhibition “Human Rights and Political Imprisonment” and through this also get to know their rights, which they are entitled to today in a democratic state. Wheelchair users are also welcome. Together with their companions and other interested parties, visitors are also invited to witness the opening of a poster exhibition “Human Rights in Plain Language”. It was designed in the Hanseatic city of Bremen. The organiser of the memorial is the association “Menschenrechtszentrum /Rights Center e.V. Cottbus”, which is supported by members of the Seniors’ Union. jennifer.rietz@menschenrechtszentrum-cottbus.de

<https://www.aktion-mensch.de/aktionstag-5-mai.html>.

New in the ESU Praesidium

President An Hermans welcomed Roland Leek from Sweden (Moderata Seniors) as a new member of the Praesidium and Vice President. He succeeds Marjatta Nykänen from Finland, who resigned from her position several months ago. Leek is looking forward to the exchange of experiences in the Praesidium.

Festive event in Stockholm

On 19th and 20th April, the Christian Democratic Seniors of Sweden celebrated their 20th anniversary. The organisation is led by Leif Hallberg, who is also Honorary President of the ESU. 70 people had accepted the invitation to Stockholm, Hallberg told to the Praesidium.

Bolzano now in 2019

The regional conference planned for the beginning of September in Bolzano (South Tirol / Italy) has had to be postponed due to scheduling reasons. As Vice President Dr. Christine von Stefenelli-Gostner told the Praesidium, the conference will now take place in spring 2019 by agreement with the South Tyrolean People's Party.

Preview of Vienna

This year's ESU Summer Academy for Leaders in Vienna (7th and 8th July) will be based on information and suggestions for the 2019 election campaign, Heinz Becker MEP, ÖSB Secretary-General and ESU Vice-President, said in Brussels on 24th April. Furthermore, the "Silver Economy" will be discussed. It focuses on products, trade and services that make life easier for people of advanced age.

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