



EUROPÄISCHE SENIOREN UNION (ESU)

EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)

Newsletter SENIOR INTERNATIONAL No.167 (engl.) 27th Nov. 2018

LEUVEN: “EUROPE is our HOME”

Presidium and Executive Committee prepare themselves for the election campaign
“Memorandum” discussed and agreed

Leuven (BE). The closer the deadline comes for elections to the European Parliament (26th May 2019), the more concrete ESU contributions to the forthcoming campaign will be. The Presidium and the Executive Committee agreed on a common strategy, for which a “Memorandum” will serve as a guide.



Participants of the Executive Committee and Presidium meeting in the Brabantal – Congress Centre in Leuven (BE)

There is agreement that statements cannot replace face-to-face conversations. Anyone wishing to convince citizens to vote must take their thoughts, worries, suggestions and their willingness to cooperate seriously in a “House of Europe”. Listening should not be left to the leading candidate of the EPP, Manfred Weber, and the other candidates. All ESU member-organisations are responsible for this, President An Hermans said at the opening of both meeting days.

Dara Murphy, the EU-election manager, sent a video message to the leaders gathered in Leuven. In it, he addressed the complex challenges of politics, praised the ESU for its commitment, including that during the Helsinki Congress, and expressed its confidence that “we can make the right decisions”.

Prof. Steven Van Hecke (BE) commented on the “election of a Spitzenkandidat” (leading candidate) system, about which he issued a mostly positive testimony (“a little bit more democratic”).

Across Europe, voters would now know who they are dealing with – in the case of Manfred Weber in particular. Anyone who wants him must vote for the EPP as well as for the candidates of the EPP in each country, he stressed.

Assuming that the agreed BREXIT date of 29th March 2019 remains, for the first time since 1979, none of the 73 MPs in the EU Parliament at present would have a mandate any more.



*Sverre Mauritzen (NO) and
Matteo Albania in discussion*



*From afar: Antonios Demetriades
(centre of picture, from Cyprus)
with his colleagues*

Matteo Albania called his talk “Social media – a strong tool also for seniors.” As EPP Communication and Marketing manager, he endeavours to make Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. popular among the older generation of political decision-makers. Using examples, he explained which messages to the voters – which is the priority – can be brought over by which digital medium most effectively.

Albania acknowledged that digital media now accounts only about 1 percent of the EPP campaign, and only about 10 to 15 percent of those over 60 are using social media. The print media, too, still has its place. In this context, it was announced that a re-design of the ESU website will be carried out in collaboration with Arneof the General Secretariat. This Newsletter will continue to be available on the website in German and English, but probably only in a shortened version, as it has been for some time. Albania once again offered interested seniors the opportunity to train them in the use of social media (in Brussels).

The “Memorandum for the 2019 European elections”

expresses the opinions and expectations of seniors in four points. *(The document will be finalised and will soon be posted on the ESU website, and the recipients of this Newsletter should receive it from the General Secretariat as an attachment to an e-mail.)*

On four pages will be presented:

1. The European Union is a project of hope.
2. How to implement the "European Pillar of Social Rights"
3. What intergenerational solidarity means in concrete terms
4. Why should there be a Commissioner who is responsible for the measures “in the area demographic change and the elderly”.



*Leena Jääskeläinen (FI),
Christine von Stefenelli (IT, South Tyrol)
and Bernhard Worms (DE)*



*Nikolay Andreev (BG) presents an
accolade from his GERB Party and its
Seniors' Association to An Hermans*



Lidmila Nemcova (CZ), Anton Bogataj (SLO), Ondrej Tunega (SK), Karel Tomek (CZ) and Ann Räämet (EST), (from left to right)



To achieve success at this event was the main focus of the meeting in Leuven



Versatile, comfortable conference facility on the outskirts of the University city of Leuven (BE)

From the discussion

about the speeches and the draft Memorandum:

*“Personal conversations about local concerns and suggestions are the most important thing!” according to **Bernhard Worms, Leif Hallberg, Etienne Vanderroost, Christine von Stefenelli, Gabriele von Peus-Bispinck, Guido Dumon and others.***

“To highlight the achievements of the EU so far!” (Anton Bogataj, Guido Dumon).

Lidmila Nemcova is concerned about the social disparities between East and West. The issue of “emigration of many young people from the Baltic States in search of well-paid jobs in the West” must be addressed finally. Elisabeth Dispaux also wants social problems to be specified.

For Ondrej Tunega (SK) “the social media bypass the old people”. The familiar channels need constant good and current information.

Antonis Demetriades, Gabriele von Peus-Bispinck and Christine von Stefenelli want to promote confidence among politicians, especially among young people, in schools and information stands among other places. For Etienne Vanderroost, Guido Dumon and Leif Hallberg, there is “only one Europe”. That must be the message!



*Two Honorary Presidents of the ESU in conversation:
Elisabeth Dispaux (BE) and Leif Hallberg (SE).
Honorary Presidents*

Maria Kanellopoulou from Greece sent her apologies, and Prof. Dr. Nicolas Estgen (Luxembourg), could not attend due to health reasons.

Several speakers advocated that at events with Manfred Weber the local seniors' organisations should also be allowed to take the floor.

An Hermans as guest at the Senioren-Union

Prof. Dr. Otto Wulff re-elected as Chairman

Magdeburg: At the 17th Federal Delegates' meeting of the CDU Seniors' Union (which corresponds to a voting congress), the ESU President, Em. Prof. Dr. An Hermans, delivered a speech on 22nd November.

She understood the invitation as an appreciation of the ESU's work, she explained at the beginning. And further: "we bring seniors together across borders. We bring the experience, the commitment and the needs of seniors to the attention of the general public. With respect for the differences and traditions in member states and regions, and motivated by a long-term pursuit of peace, freedom, cooperation and respect for the dignity of every human being. A common life mission connects us. A Christian and humanistic vision of man and the world inspires us. It found and finds its expression in the political action of the Christian Democrats, who made our continent great. Keep working on it, do not be afraid, face new challenges – that brings you together today."

At the European level, the ESU could "learn a lot from your work," emphasised An Hermans, and she was grateful for it, "especially to those who shape the European Seniors' Union with us."

The President continued: "tomorrow also, we need strong personalities who, with the necessary openness and spirit of long-term thinking, also take seriously the concerns of people in actual existence, in fact, to make an honest, effective policy that will help people and increase the quality of life. This is our only weapon against populist interpretations and promises that shine like golden tinsel."

Germany and the whole of Europe, according to An Hermans, are requested "to look to a joint project: to build Europe step by step". The President recalled Jean-Claude Juncker's statement in 2014 that politics must ensure that citizens considered EUROPE to be "GOOD" because they were given protection and a better quality of life. However, the member states had failed to find new ways of tackling current problems together. Now she puts her hope in Manfred Weber, the Spitzenkandidat for the elections to the European Parliament in May 2019. *(According to the text of the speech)*

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During the Congress, **Prof. Dr. Otto Wulff** was confirmed as chairman for another two years with 93.4 percent of the vote. One of his deputies is **Claus Bernhold**. As board members elected were, among others: **Dr. Gabriele Peus-Bispinck** (ESU Vice-President) and **Rolf Berend**, who – like Claus Bernhold - represent the CDU Seniors' Union on the ESU Executive Committee.

The ESU President warmly congratulated Prof. Wulff and her colleagues in the ESU on their (re) election.

Otto Wulff in Magdeburg:

Europe: above all, a community of values

In his speech, Wulff called on the Europeans to have more stamina in the fight for the preservation of liberal values. "Europe is first and foremost a community of values and not just a trading company," said Wulff. The chairman warned against nationalist and Islamist attacks on freedom that could become a major threat to Europe. With withdrawal movements in the field of liberal European traditions "we will fail in the long term" warned Wulff. With warnings about tolerance alone, the so-called Islamist warriors of God could not be stopped. And the advance of right-wing radicals reminds many older people of the twenties in the last century, when enemies of democracy brought disaster to Europe.

Penalise breaches of duty consistently

The Chairman warned against an increase in state dissatisfaction in Germany, when Muslims put the Sharia before the Constitution, criminal clans built a parallel society or Muslim parents, despite universal compulsory education, did not send their children to school. "Those who do not obey the law can expect consequences. If they do not succeed, then one should not be surprised at the state's annoyance," said Wulff. Immigrants who feel that the constitution is an attack on their personal identity should simply leave the country. "Dialogue is only possible if everyone adheres to the rules, emphasised Wulff. "Dialogue does not mean steadfastness." With "complacency and a laid-back mentality, we will not maintain our success."

In view of the "diesel-affair" in Germany, Wulff sharply criticised the car industry. "Anyone found guilty of manipulation and who therefore transfers high-billion-dollar sums as compensation across the Atlantic to the United States should not go unpunished in Germany," he criticised.

Ensure adequate pensions

Wulff called for a pension reform that prevents workers who have worked through their whole life from getting a social welfare level pension at the end. "This is a scandal we can not accept," said Wulff. The Chairman welcomed the intention of the Federal Government to allow people to work beyond their retirement age.

(According to a press release)

Baltic Region: visit of the Pope

Francis: Lithuania may be a bridge builder!

Vilnius. After a sunny and hot summer this year, social and political life in Lithuania regained its intensity in autumn. Žibartas Jackūnas writes: “we had an extraordinary event – the remarkable visit of Pope Francis to Lithuania from 22nd to 23rd September and then to Latvia and Estonia. The three Baltic states celebrate 2018 the 100th anniversary of their independence from Russia.

Addressing some of the peculiarities of Lithuanian history, Pope Francis in Vilnius underlined the importance of dialogue, tolerance and the peaceful coexistence of different nations, inviting young people to join Christ in the “tenderness revolution”. He expressed the expectation that Lithuania “will become a country that chooses to build bridges instead of walls”. And that it can play the role of „a teacher demonstrating the way to reconcile and harmonise diversity“.

“Ingrid Simonyté for President”

Lithuanian seniors involved in all election campaigns

Vilnius. The current political life in Lithuania is marked by the upcoming election period. Three elections will take place next year: local elections – 3rd March; presidential elections – 12th May and the European Parliament elections - 26th May.

In connection with the presidential elections, the HU-LCD (Homeland Union/Lithuanian Christian Democrats) took a special measure: the party organised an open, democratic primary election (3rd -4th November) to select its candidate for the upcoming presidential election. Mrs. **Ingrida Šimonyté** won the election (another candidate was the diplomat Vygaudas Ušackas) and is now the candidate of the HU-LCD for the position of President.

She is member of the Lithuanian Parliament, a former minister of finance (2009-2012) and deputy-chair of the Board of the Bank of Lithuania. It is interesting to note that not only members of HU-LCD took part in the election; other people, not members of HU-LCD but sympathising with its values, also voted during the election. **In addition, one could observe that many seniors, including members of the HU-LCD Seniors’ community, helped to prepare and carry out the election.**

Further activities of our Seniors’ community will be mostly concerned with the above-mentioned elections, which will be held in first half of 2019. We are discussing our possibilities to contribute to the success of HU-LCD in these elections.

Zibartas Jackūnas

More relevant than ever



At the invitation of **Prof. Norbert Lammert**, President of the German Bundestag until 2017 and currently Chairman of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the Federal Chancellor **Dr. Angela Merkel**, gave a lecture on this current topic. A panel discussion was attended by former parliamentary presidents - including from France and Poland. The Swiss poet Adolf Muschg gave the ceremonial address for Lammert's 70th birthday.

News

Manfred Weber (DE) not only leads the European Conservatives and Christian Democrats (EPP) as the Spitzenkandidat in the elections for the European Parliament, but also his own party. The Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU) elected him in first place of the CSU list in Munich on 24th November with 98.9 percent of the vote. Previously, he had promoted a strong, united, stable Europe, writes dpa.

In honour of the assassination victims of the Berlin Christmas Market in December 2016 and all victims of terrorism and violence, the Editor has once again laid a bouquet of flowers on behalf of the ESU in front of the Berlin Gedächtniskirche (Memorial Church) According to recent press releases, the assassin Anis Amri had people who knew his plan and could possibly have prevented this attack.

Religious extremism is, according to the International Society for Human Rights (IGFM), “one of the most important causes of misery and flight to millions of people,” according to the weekly newspaper “die Kirche” (Berlin). Also, deep-set tensions between religious groups also caused discrimination and violence and some serious human rights violations against minorities, according to the report. Martin Lessenthin (IGFM) is quoted as saying: “this is how causes of flight are created”.

The South Tyrolean newspaper “Dolomiten” reported in text and pictures about the EPP Congress in Helsinki. It quoted from the speech of the ESU President, who had called the ESU a “lawyer for the rights of seniors inside and outside the EPP” at the plenary.

“The youth of today are the seniors of tomorrow” wrote Antonios Demetriades in the latest bulletin of his Seniors Organisation of Cyprus. In the involvement of the older generation at local and European level, he sees the condition for their concerns becoming aware everywhere. In the 35th year of the partition of his country, he calls for the end of the illegal Turkish occupation, the withdrawal of troops and the observance of relevant international Resolutions.

ESU Diary 2019

Agreed by the Presidium and the Executive Committee

on 24th November in Leuven

22nd -24th February PRAGUE (CZ):

*Presidium and Executive Committee
Meeting with Manfred Weber (requested)
Organiser: Doz. Lidmila Nemcova*

21st - 23rd March BOZEN (IT/South Tyrol)

*Conference of the South Tyrol Seniors' Association (SVP)
with representatives from the neighbouring countries
Organiser: Dr. Christine von Stefenelli*

28th June – 1st July VIENNA (AT)

*(1) Anniversary: “Ten Years of the Summer Academy”
(2) Summer Academy 2019, with results of the European elections*

4th -8th September KRYNICA ZDRÓJ / NOWY SACZ (PL)

*President and ESU delegation at the 11th Forum of the
University of the Third Age (as part of the XXIX Business Forum)
Organiser: Janusz Marszalek*

End of September: SANDANSKI (BG)

*Statutory ESU-Congress (election congress) at the invitation of
the Bulgarian member-organisation SGERB
Organiser: Prof. Nikolay Andreev*

End of October or in November: BRATISLAVA (SK)

*Conference of the Slovakian member-organisation
with participants from neighbouring countries
Organisers: Jozef Miklosko / Ondrej Tunega*

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Awaiting a date (planned for Feb./March): SPAIN (ES)

*At the suggestion of
and organised by Carmen Quintanilla Barba:
Regional conference*

IMPRESSUM

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