



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

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ESU is committed to a “Better Europe”
Governing bodies and Regional conference in Prague /
Learning lessons from the past

PRAGUE. The European Seniors' Union sees its main task currently in the success of the elections to the European Parliament. Representatives of the governing bodies (Presidium and Executive Committee) assembled in Prague from 22nd to 24th February, together with members from the Czech Republic and guests from 14 other countries, agreed that the situation on our continent calls for determined political action towards a "Better Europe", for which **Manfred Weber** stands as the EPP “Spitzenkandidat”.

As its **campaign manager Dara Murphy** announced, Weber is currently day after day on the road in Europe. True to his promise after his election in Helsinki (November 2018), he is in direct contact with the citizens to ask their opinions and suggestions. He wants to have been everywhere before Easter.

As **ESU President An Hermans** acknowledged at the start, the priority now is to get every vote for the candidates of the European People's Party. Whether or not it will continue to be made up of 51 member parties from 27 states in the future, which makes it the strongest political force in the

EU Parliament, is not yet decided, said Murphy. Weber is also open to partnerships with other groups, e.g. the Greens and Liberals.



EU-campaign manager Dara Murphy



Climate-change expert Peter Van Kemseke

Murphy thanked the ESU leadership for their commitment to the campaign. It is reflected in the draft election program, which is expected to be presented on 20th March. Compared to the first draft, the number of policy areas has been reduced and additional room has been given to subsidiarity. The EPP attaches great importance to tumour research and

treatment and wants to enforce high standards of health policy. He called for the strengthening of external and internal security, and with that for every citizen, which includes a coordinated foreign policy and progress in the safeguarding of creation. Murphy suggested that when in contact with potential voters, the results achieved by the EU should be mentioned. Europe is not the problem but the solution. "We are good, but we have to get better"!

Convinced that the elections will be won at the grass-roots, the Slovakian member association has decided to nominate its own candidate for the European Parliament:



Ondrej Tunega

(in the photo left, together with Prof. Nikolaj Andreev, Vice-president from Bulgaria – centre of picture – as well as his Slovakian colleges, Jozef Miklosko and Dr.Milos Nemecek)

He could not stop thinking that, in 2014, his country was at the bottom of the voter turnout. He still meets the argument: "Oh, Brussels is so far away!" As the candidate now emphasised in his presentation to the ESU, he hopes for support from citizens who lose their families through emigration to western countries, which disturbs family structures and increases the loneliness of older citizens.

Manfred Hopfengärtner from Bavaria has had over 20 encounters with voters already. Thereby, the CSU candidates introduced themselves and were met with great interest by their conversation partners.

Tomas Zdechovsky from the Czech Republic can draw on his experience as a member of the European Parliament and announced his running again as a candidate. Nominated by the KDU/CSL (Christian and Democratic Union/ Czechoslovak People's Party), he commits himself primarily in the EU parliament to issues of migration and crime-fighting - issues that are often the dominant focus of discussion. And he wants to continue this activity. The fact that his party, despite its 26,000 members, currently has no seat in the state parliament does trouble him. He expects more attention for the KDU/ DSL, e.g. with a strategy aimed at a better life in old age.

ESU-President An Hermans (BE) and **Vice-president Lidmila Nemcova (CZ)**, who chaired the Prague meeting, expressed their appreciation of all the initiatives in the election campaign. With the adoption of the "Memorandum with a view to the 2019 European Elections", they emphasised there would be a good compass. This document refers back to the 2017 EPP Congress in Malta, which addressed the ageing of society. Concretising these statements, in the Memorandum the ESU now calls for an EU Commissioner "who is tasked with a wide range of necessary measures in the field of demographic change and the elderly". Thereby, this would "increase the effectiveness of the solutions and strengthen the connection and proximity to older people".

The regional conferences scheduled for March in South Tyrol and for April in Spain will provide further opportunities for an interim review and new inspirations for the election campaign, President Hermans asserted.

Encouragement for political engagement

the seniors' politicians gathered in Prague learned from personalities from politics, the church and society. Their credo: learn the lessons from history!

Before the Presidium the former Czech Minister of Culture and Vice-chairman of the KDU/CSL, **Daniel Herman** spoke.



An Hermans, Daniel Herman, Lidmila Nemcova



Father Ing. Miloslav Fiala

He presented a broad sweep of history from Emperor Charles IV in the 14th century through the Czech-German history and culture, the horrors of the Nazi regime and the burden of relations to his country with its neighbours in the north, to the Communist coup d'etat in 1948, the Prague Spring of 1968, and the Velvet Revolution of 1989-90, associated with the name Vaclav Havel.

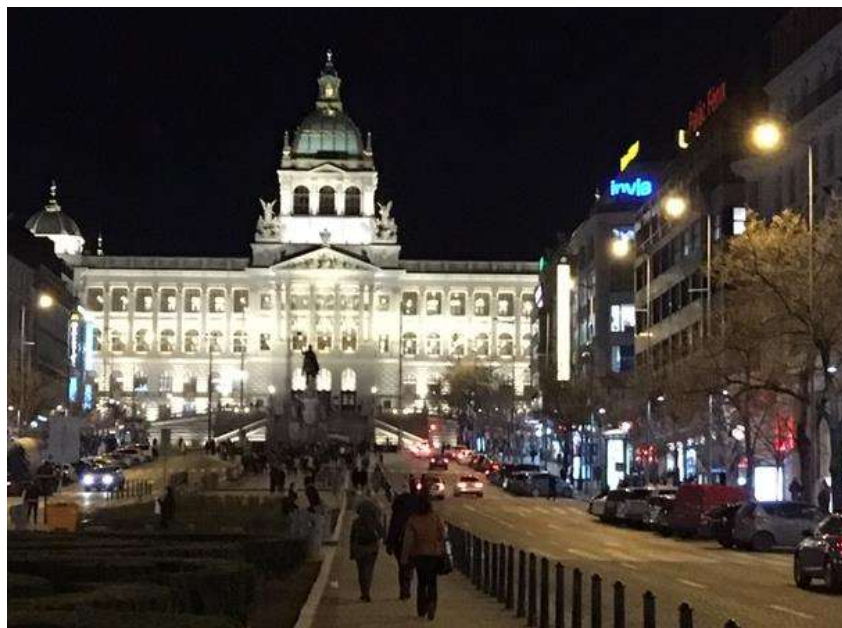
His conclusion: against preachers of hate, we continue to build the "house of Europe" as a haven of reconciliation!



Representatives of the hosting Seniors' organisation SKS, from left to right: Stanislav Kodys, Dr. Dagmar Koutska, Vice-president Karel Tomek, President Doz. Lidmila Nemcova, Jirina Svjdoová, Dr. Nemeč

Photo right: Ivo Mares

Before the participants at the regional conference, Lidmila Nemcova, President of the Czech Seniors' Association, discussed in detail the history and events of 1989/90. Many fellow citizens had become victims of the communists. For her organisation it was natural to participate in the honouring of deceased prisoners and to use encounters with young people to explain values such as peace, freedom and justice.



During an evening stroll through Wenceslas Square (in the picture above), Mrs. Nemcova and her husband provided the opportunity to visit the grave of Jan Palach, who had burned himself here 50 years ago in protest against the hated regime.

Father Ing. Miloslav Fiala gave the conference participants an insight into the work of Caritas in his country, for which he works in an honorary capacity, and recalled the words of Jesus: "whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me". He pleaded for a "poor church for the poor".

Peter Van Kemseke, a Belgian diplomat, put his finger on the wounds of nature and urged that much greater efforts should be made in Eastern European and African countries to mitigate climate change. Of course, the structural change also requires new jobs.

The writer **Olga Bezdekova** quoted from the memories of her father, a pilot whose life represents the generation of the "occupation of Czechoslovakia by the German Wehrmacht and the years until the coup 1948".

As witness to the revolutionary events of 30 years ago, **Ivo Mares**, a former journalist and Protestant pastor, proved himself. That the Prague student demo of 17th November 1989, would develop to mass protests with 300,000 participants within a few days was still a miracle for him. Already by the end of that month, approval for free elections had been reached. And with Vaclav Havel as president in December, democracy was restored.. Havel's statement that democracy is not given once and for all is significant again today and requires active political action.



The delegates from the Republic of Cyprus: Antonis Demetriades, chairman and ESU Vice-president (right) with his colleagues

The ESU Presidium and Executive Committee...

received reports from the President and Secretary-General, discussed and approved the budget for 2019, agreed to adjust the membership fees and made decisions about future conference dates. Highlights will be the meetings in Vienna, with the anniversary of the Summer Academy for Leaders (28th June – 1st July), and the election congress in Sandanski, Bulgaria (27-29th September). See also the events diary in this edition!

The guests enjoyed a concert in which a women's choir performed Czech and Slovak songs by Smetana, Suchon, Eben, Dvořák and others. Conductor: Jan Frank



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In memory of the deceased colleagues Ivan Kravjanski (SK), Hans Machate (DE) and Liliane Caruana (Malta), all rose from their seats.

Change of staff in Norway

In the Norwegian town of Trondheim, an election congress of the seniors' association "Hoyre Landsforbund" took place in the middle of February. It belongs to the ESU. At the invitation of **Sverre Mauritzen**, the former chairman, **ESU President An Hermans** and **Secretary General Guido Dumon** participated. The President gave a speech. **Lars Myranne** was elected as the new chairman of the Seniors' Association. In

Prague, he introduced himself meanwhile as a new member of the Executive Committee of the ESU.



The new chairman with the ESU President

The conference participants decided on a statement which said: "Young and old need each other in a variety of situations. Respect and understanding increase the quality of life." Solidarity between the generations is also a challenge for the preservation of lasting political understanding.

A reform under the motto "Live all your life!" finds support among the Høyre seniors, as it gives older citizens the necessary care. More attention is being paid to public health care, education and the opening up of the labour market "to everyone". "Our political life needs the active participation of young and old", it emphasises. "Norway was an active partner in 2012 in the "European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between the Generations" and should also declare these principles every year on 29th April.

BAGSO: "YES TO EUROPE"

The Federal Association of Seniors' Organizations (BAGSO), based in Düsseldorf (DE), calls on all eligible voters to vote for a united and democratic Europe on 26th May 2019. The election appeal "YES to Europe!" states: "we, the elders, know that the European elections give us the opportunity to have a say in the future of Europe. It is up to us whether Europe can realise its potential or whether it drops back into egocentric nationalism."

"Heinz K. Becker - a role model"

ÖSB President thanks the outgoing MEP/
Wolfram Pirchner is standing as candidate

Heinz K. Becker, Vienna, will no longer be a member of the European Parliament after the elections on 26th May. According to **ÖSB President Ingrid Korosec**, he said he "did not want to run again". Furthermore, it says in their information: "Dear Heinz, thank you for your many years of commitment to and in Europe! You are an example in terms of dedication, willingness to implement and diligence! "The new (senior) candidate presented by the Austrian Seniors' Association, ÖSB is called **Wolfram Pirchner**. Standing in 6th place of the Austrian People's Party list, "he is now fighting for as many preferred votes as possible in order to be a strong voice for the generations of the 50+", writes the President of the ÖSB.

Heinz K. Becker (69) is Vice-president of the European Seniors' Union (ESU). At home, he holds the office of ÖSB Secretary-General. He has been an EU parliamentarian since 2014. His withdrawal as a Member of Parliament is regretted in ESU circles. With Wolfgang Pirchner standing for election, one of the most well-known TV presenters in Austria has our best wishes for his election success. (www.facebook.com/PirchnerWolfgang)

Seniors' conference in Minsk with the "Eastern Partnership" by Tatjana Zelko ("Nashe Pakalene")

In a message dated 22nd February to the members of the ESU Executive Committee in Prague, the president of the Belarusian seniors' organization "Nahe Pokalene/ Our Generation" (with observer status in the ESU) wishes us a successful election campaign. The text reads: "unfortunately, Belarus is not part of the united Europe, and we cannot participate actively in this event."

And then: **"We would like to inform you that the European Commission has pledged its support to the First Conference of Seniors' Organizations of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and the EU Member States."**

This conference will take place in Minsk on 24th - 25th April (new date!). It concerns the involvement of the elderly in political society, the promotion of their pension rights and about the pension systems.

The ESU is cordially invited to the conference. "We would also like to see the ESU extend to the members of the Eastern Partnership. These are the countries of Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, whose representatives will be present" writes Tatiana Zelko. (Detailed information on: belpensioners@yahoo.com or Viber/WhatsApp - +375291081506)

Additional ESU dates 2019

21st - 23rd March: BOZEN (Italy/South Tyrol): Regional conference.

Working title: "South Tyrol and Europe. Analysis and Challenges"

12th -13th April (new date!) CIUDAD REAL (Spain): Regional conference

24th- 25. April (new date!): MINSK: Conference of the Eastern Partnership Seniors (EaP)

28th June – 1st July VIENNA

28th June: Presidium and Anniversary "10 Years of the Summer Academy"

29th June: Executive Committee; 29.6. – 1. 7.: Summer Academy 2019

27th - 29th September: SANDANSKI (Bulgaria): ESU Election Congress

6th - 8th November: BRATISLAVA (Slovakia): Regional conference

Topic: "What does 30 years of freedom mean from the senior's point of view?"

19th November: ZAGREB (Croatia): Presidium

20th - 21st November: ZAGREB: EPP Election Congress with ESU-participation

Prague photo-gallery



*participants from Northern Europe:
ESU Honorary President Leif Hallberg
(SE, 2nd from right) with Lars Myranne (N),
Leena Jääskeläinen (Fi.) and righttt)
Roland Leek (Vice-president, SE)*



*the Polish delegation with
Margit and Seán Hawkes, as
well as ESU-Vice-president
Marszalek*



*Dr. Gabriele Peus-Bispinck (DE)
and Carmen Quintanilla Barba (E),
both Vice-presidents*



*from left - Dr. Edeltraud Paul (A), Ulrich Winz
and Manfred Hopfengärtner (D),
Dr. Christine von Stefenelli (I/South Tyrol,
Vice-president), Anton Bogataj (SLO) (right)*



*Final applause for a successful and inspirational meeting:
1st row from left to right.: Leena Jääskelainen from Finland and the delegation from Spain
(Catalonia). Attending for the first time: Josep Isern Triedu (2nd from left).
2nd row: Noella Jakobs and Yolande Van Droogenbroeck (B)*

IMPRESSUM

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