



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

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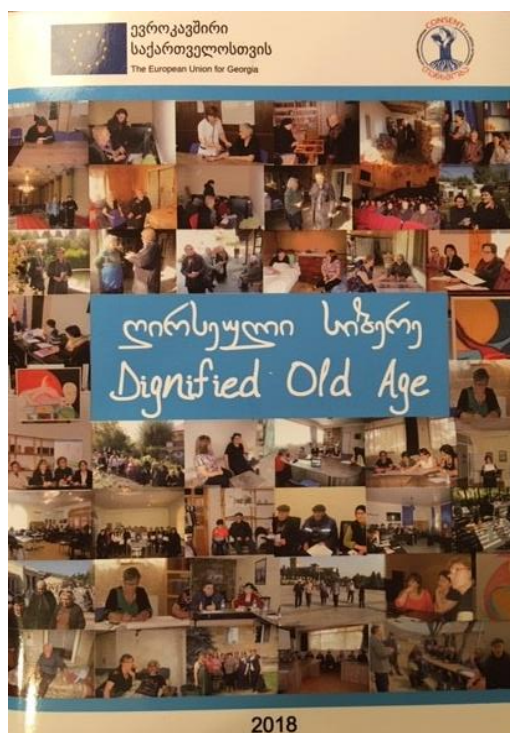
Seniors of the “Eastern Partnership”: “Yes, we can do that”

Already the drive from the airport to the city centre of Minsk, to the hotel in the former Methodius and Cyril monastery, was a pleasure: a dead-straight road over many kilometres with cultivated green strips, without bits and pieces of paper, not to mention no graffiti on the house walls of the city of over a million inhabitants. Vandalism?

Absolutely none!



“First Forum of Seniors’ Organisations from the countries of the Eastern Partnership and the EU “ is on the conference folder



A brochure from Georgia entitled "Dignified Old Age" reports in text and images about a variety of initiatives for the benefit of an elderly and sometimes very poor population (as part of a project co-financed by the European Union for two years).

So completely different to most European capitals and a nice atmosphere in the conference to which the Belarussian seniors' organization "Our Generation" / "Nasha Pakalenne" had invited us. It has observer status within the ESU. What could we expect here?



President Tatjana Zelko has managed to bring together representatives of senior citizens' associations and senior citizens' initiatives from six former Soviet republics - under the umbrella of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and in cooperation with the European Commission. The invitation was also followed up by ESU President Prof. Dr.

An Hermans (BE) and Vice-president Gabriele Peus-Bispinck (DE), who represented the CDU Seniors' Union as well as the reporter of this Newsletter. In addition, Regine Matthijsen (NL), Vice President of the European Seniors' Platform AGE, also came to Minsk

In this, the "1st Forum" of its kind, according to the view of the manager and her team, the situation of older citizens in each country should be discussed. And so it came gushing out of the mouths of the speakers of eleven organizations and associations, just as if they had long been waiting for this opportunity. Embedded in the presentation of their homelands - historically, geographically, administratively, ethnically and sometimes politically - it became quite specific.



The country presentations are being questioned

It soon became apparent that there are considerable differences in social terms between Belarus, Moldova (Transnistria), Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. In terms of security in old age, that is: the level of pensions, many wishes remain open everywhere. Payments are at a significantly lower level than in Western and Northern Europe, and corresponding demands on politicians have so far had little or only very modest success.



The Praesidium of the 3rd session: from left to right: An Hermans and her assistant Arne Cools, Prof. Michail Pastuhov (Belarus) and Rovshan Novruzov (Azerbaijan)

The experiences in facilitating the lives of the elderly, to ensure their well-being, are highly differentiated and testify to the high level of commitment of the NGOs and other initiatives from civil society. They deserve to be exchanged at shorter intervals and tested for cooperation opportunities. So it is only logical that it was said at the end of the two-day forum: "We stay together and meet each year from now on." And in view of the abundance of upcoming tasks: "Yes, we can and do it!"



Power-ladies: Olga Krivoruchko (Moldova/Transnistria), the hostess, and Oksana Alistratova, who invited all to her homeland of Transnistria. She works there for the NGO „Interaction“, which is focused on the defence of human rights.

For 2020, Oksana Alistratova from Moldova (Transnistria) has issued an invitation. Tatjana Zelko was again entrusted with the preparation of the follow-up meetings within the framework of the "Eastern Partnership"

There is also interest in getting to know the activities of the ESU member associations. According to ESU President Prof. Dr. An Hermans in her speech, this is largely determined by the challenges of demographic change.



An Hermans in conversation with the partners from Belarus

Left in the picture above: Natallya Katschanouskaya, who has made English her profession and enjoys taking groups through the inner city of Minsk. Around the Freedom Square are many churches – Orthodox and Catholic – that have been rebuilt or renovated since the War. In the evenings, an indescribable atmosphere prevails, to which hundreds of students as well as musicians contribute.

The tasks arising as a result, such as participation in social development and solidarity between the generations, demanded a great effort in all parts of Europe. "Give people the opportunity to speak out and tell their offspring about their lives. The European Day of Solidarity between Generations, which takes place every year on 29th April, is a good occasion for that."

At the end of the debate, An Hermans, addressing the speakers, said, "it's wonderful what you do within your means. We need your empathy. In principle, we have the same concerns and problems. Let us consider what we can do together! You are welcome as guests of our ESU events, and I would like to come back to you!"

What moves and engages them

In the following are comments from the speakers:

Belarus: The President of the organization "Nasha Pakalenne" does not expect the political parties and the government to adopt a policy for the elderly of the society. She places her hope and expectation on civil society initiatives - in organizations and in the EaP platform. "We want to change!" she declared with applause, and "I can not be silent!" - Oleg Volchek, whose organization provides legal aid, laments the passivity of most seniors; their rights are curtailed. "We have no serious position." He argues for the interaction of the generations and the influence of the West on the politics of his country. Social projects of the government do not come to fruition, the money is distributed unfairly. The labour market prefers people under 45.

Armenia: Anait Gasparyan of the "Seniors-Generation Union" states: the pension is low and corruption is high. Our Association promotes social responsibility. "We need private services for the elderly." The retirement age for men and women is 63 years.

Azerbaijan: According to Rovshan Novruzov, pensions have been raised modestly in recent years. They range from \$100 (minimum rate) to \$150 ("normal") and \$1,000 for state employees. Improvements in health care are the focus.



*Tatjana Zelko (4th left) with some of her colleagues and partners.
From the left: Aliaksander Taustyka (Chair of the Business Association),
Valiantsina Vyazhevich, Yekatseryna Tsimashova, Ryhor Kastusyov (Chairman of the
Belarusian People's Party) and Mikola Bambiza.*

Georgia: There are democratic conditions in the country; 18 nationalities are counted, says Tsira Meshishvili of the NGO "Tolerance". They are met with respect. Unlike in the cities, many live in solitude in the countryside. There is no hunger, but few jobs and also problems with medical care. The proportion of disabled people in society is increasing.

Moldova (Transnistria): Oksana Alistratova is passionate about translating the declarations of human rights into practical action. This starts with access to running water and sewerage

Ukraine: Natalya Shpyolova of the Association "Social Services," using the example of the city of Vinnitsa, showed that the municipalities have access to funds for the social sector, which should be used only appropriately. In her city in 2019, there is at least 7 million rubles in the budget. Anna Czajkowska of the same Initiative, is monitoring forms of age discrimination and wants to strengthen the self-esteem of older people.

She also sees them as responsible for the diligent interaction of their grandchildren with the social media, combined with the teaching of ethical values.



ESU Vice-president Dr. Gabriele Peus-Bispinck is impressed by the diverse initiatives of the participants and encourages them to further action. Her impressions were also conveyed to a journalist in an interview. In the centre of the picture: the representative from AGE leaves the conference early due to traffic conditions. Both had previously given highly-regarded speeches.

Кто мы такие:
 Региональный механизм развития гражданского общества стран Восточного партнерства – проект сотрудничества с участием стран Восточного партнерства (Армения, Азербайджан, Беларусь, Грузия, Молдова и Украина), направленный на повышение роли представительств гражданского общества в региональных реформах в этих странах. Проект финансируется Европейским Союзом, а выполняет его международная консорциум во главе с GDSI Limited (Ирландия). Период реализации проекта – с 01.07.2020 гт.

Что мы делаем:
 Осуществляем поддержку представителям ЕС в их работе с традиционным обществом.
 Развиваем партнерские отношения с организациями гражданского общества в странах Восточного партнерства, чтобы повысить их роль и значимость.
 Предлагаем организациям гражданского общества разработать инновационные инструменты в сфере электронной демократии и электронного участия.
 Разрабатываем специализированные курсы электронного обучения и вебинары для представителей гражданского общества.
 Поддерживаем инициативы лидеров гражданского общества в рамках ежегодной специализированной программы в странах Восточного партнерства.
 Создаем условия для расширения возможностей сотрудничества и межличностно партнерских связей в регионе EП.

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Региональный механизм развития гражданского общества стран Восточного партнерства

Поддержка гражданского общества: инновации, активизм и изменения

EaP Eastern Partnership

With a leaflet, the EaP informs about their goals and achievements. For its citizens, Russian is historically the most common and connecting language

Minsk is worth a visit



In the immediate vicinity of the hill on which the city centre was founded, on the other side of the river Svislach, a modern new town has been created which is worth a look. On the left: the chapel dedicated to St. Cyril of Turow; right: the old town hall. Day and night, the area around the Freedom Square is a popular destination for its citizens and visitors from near and far, due to its architectural monuments and restaurants.

In the urban landscape, monuments and street names remind one of the Belarussian / Lithuanian affiliation and, from 1922 to 1991, the affiliation to the USSR. The victims of the German occupation 1941-1944, numbering tens of thousands, are remembered in a dignified form.

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News from Prague

Prague. Radio Proglas has recently reported twice about the Christian Seniors' Association SKS. The broadcaster also took part in the committee meetings and the Regional Conference of the ESU in February this year. At the invitation of the Christian Democratic Party KDU-CSL, Lidmila Nemcova gave a talk at the end of March in Brno, at whose congress a speech on the social problems in Europe was held. The SKS Chair and ESU Vice-president emphasized the

importance of having seniors speaking out across the country and influencing political decisions. Finally, the role of seniors was also the subject of the SKS annual conference held in Prague on 13th April, at which the KDU-CSL candidates presented themselves for the European Parliament. A former party leader recalled the 100-year history of the "Christian Democrats - Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-CSL) from memory.

IMPRESSUM

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