



# *EUROPÄISCHE SENIOREN UNION (ESU)*

## *EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)*

*Newsletter SENIOR INTERNATIONAL (SI) Issue No.172 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019*

### **ESU: New chapter opened for Europe ....**

**10<sup>th</sup> Summer Academy for Leaders / Resolutely into the future**

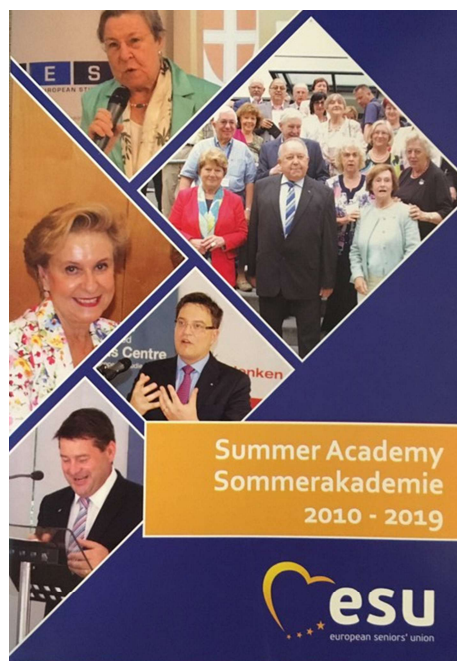
VIENNA. From 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019, leading personalities from the ESU member-associations met together for the 10<sup>th</sup> Summer Academy in the grounds of the Springer-Schlössl in Vienna-Meidling. Here, they were guests of the Austrian Seniors' Association and its Political Academy, as well as the Martens Centre for Political Studies.



*Named after its former owner, Baron Springer, the "Springer-Schlössl" from 1887 dominates the grounds of the Political Academy, including the "half-timbered house" conference building (on the left in the picture) and (apart from the absence of air-conditioning), a nicely decorated conference hotel from 1975. The castle was built by Fellner and Hellner, who worked as theatre architects throughout Europe, and who built among others the Vienna Konzerthaus and the opera houses in Bratislava, Frankfurt (Main) and Chernivtsi. In 1938, it was confiscated as Jewish property and became a Nazi training facility, fortunately it was spared*

*to a great extent from the hail of bombs all around it at the end of the war. Today, 70 natural monuments in the park are reminders of the former "Tivoli" in these grounds, whose name lives on as the name of the street: "Tivoligasse".*

At the beginning of the event, the Presidium and the Executive Committee met and discussed (please read about it below). A number of people spoke about the anniversary of the Summer Academy. They conveyed their appreciation for **Dr. Marilies Flemming** (Vienna), who is seen as the founder and source of inspiration for the event. She was unable to attend due to illness, but expressed herself in a message read out by **Gertraud Pörtl**. In her honour, the ESU General Secretariat has published a booklet in which the respective topics of the Summer Academy are recalled, and many of the like-minded politician's companions have expressed their appreciation of her.



*ESU President Prof. Dr. An Hermans speaks on the occasion of the anniversary*

After welcoming the participants from 20 countries and thanking all of the supporters by ESU President **An Hermans**, the floor was taken by **Dr. Dietmar Halper**, director of the Political Academy. He analysed the political developments in Austria and expressed confidence that the national elections at the beginning of September will once again enable Sebastian Kurz to continue his Chancellorship.

The President of the hosting Austrian Seniors' Association (ÖSB), **Ingrid Korosec** built up this hope and expectation with the announcement that 35 percent of the votes recently were for the ÖVP, among them 46 percent of senior citizens. The state elections were just as successful. She called **Marilies Flemming** a "convinced European", whose withdrawal tears a painful hole. Her successor will be – according to Mrs Korosec - **Heinz K. Becker** - (he was 69 on 29<sup>th</sup> June!), and who has withdrawn from the European Parliament. He will again run for Vice-president of the ESU and also will become the European spokesman for the People's Party. He also benefits from many years of experience as ÖSB Secretary-General, said Ms. Korosec. Becker transfers this office into the hands of his current deputy on 1<sup>st</sup> September.



*Ingrid Korosec, Heinz K. Becker and Dr. Dieter Halper*

Mrs. Korosec encouraged ESU to continue holding traditional Summer Academies in Vienna. Europe is for her a "social network" that must raise social standards and prevent illegal migration.



*Prof. Dr. Otto Wulff and Dr. Bernhard Worms during their speeches*

**Prof. Dr. Otto Wulff**, chairman of the CDU Seniors' Union (DE) since 2002, argued vigorously for the cohesion of old and young in society. The big tasks ahead for Europe should not only be discussed, but must be tackled above all else! For him, this also includes the sensible use of digitisation that excludes a "total control of the people".

In a video message, the President of the European People's Party, **Joseph Daul** (FR), thanked the European Seniors' Union and especially Marilies Flemming for their political commitment; he trusts that the ESU will continue her commitment.

**Dr. Bernhard Worms** (DE), honorary chairman of the CDU Seniors' Union and President of the ESU from 2001 to 2013, recalled a statement from the German Constitution: "the dignity of human beings is inviolable", which imposes a high obligation on all decision-makers. For

the outgoing "soul" of the Summer Academies, Dr. Marilies Flemming, that is the measure of all things.

Also for **Prof. Dr. An Hermans** (BE), she will "always be with us". In this context, the President paid tribute to the commitment of the Austrian politician and former minister in the important Working Group 1 of the EPP, in which she was also valued as the developer and editor of policy documents.

The Summer Academies - according to the President - have become "inspiring" for many guests; there was and is abundant information, and it establishes new friendships across national borders. The EU election campaign has been a major challenge for many of us, the President emphasised. The electorate insists to become involved once again in the future. The Summer Academy, which arose from a "South-East" regional conference in 2009, and which has been held annually since 2010, is a good forum for something new, for the opening of a new chapter.



And so consequently that was the general topic of the Summer Academy: "Let's open the New Chapter for Europe". It refers to the elections to the European Parliament at the end of May, in which the candidates competing from the ESU - Leif Hallberg (SE), Ondrej Tunega (SK) and Wolfgang Pfitzner (AT) – were unsuccessful with their electorates' votes. And it takes into account the current challenges of the coming weeks and months.

Speeches, talks and discussions justify being optimistic. There is overall agreement that there is no convincing alternative to EUROPE, with its understanding of peace, freedom and democracy. All attempts to deny the results of common action and to speak the language of nationalism and populism must be confronted jointly.

*(At the time of the Summer Academy, the personnel decisions of Brussels and Strasbourg were not yet known.)*

**Prof. Steven Van Hecke**, Catholic University of Leuven (BE), spoke about the results and conclusions of the European elections. He recalled the convincing vote by the EPP in Helsinki (November 2018) for Manfred Weber (CSU) as the "Spitzenkandidat" (*leading candidate*). Van Hecke expressed his relief about the increased voter turnout in Slovakia, Poland, Germany and some other countries; it also gave him satisfaction that, despite all the disappointments, Parliament will not be dominated by the extreme right in the future. The EPP faction remains the strongest in Parliament.

## *Important EU personnel decisions*

*The interim nominations made by the heads of state and government:*

*For the first half of the legislature, the EU Parliament will be chaired by the Europe-friendly Social Democrat, David-Maria Sassoli from Italy. The election of this successor to Antonio Tajani (EPP) took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> July.*

*Manfred Weber remains as chairman of the EPP-faction in the EU Parliament*

*At the suggestion of some states, the EU Commission Presidency is surprising because, departing from the principle of "Spitzenkandidaten" ("leading candidates"), the German minister Ursula von der Leyen (CDU) is in the running. Like the other candidates mentioned here, she will face parliamentary elections on 16<sup>th</sup> July. In Germany, the decision for von der Leyen - as of 4<sup>th</sup> July - led to a strain on the "grand coalition"; Federal Chancellor Merkel abstained on this matter in Brussels in consideration of her social-democratic government partners.*

*Charles Michel, acting Prime Minister of Belgium, a Liberal, is proposed for the post of EU Council President (currently Donald Tusk)*

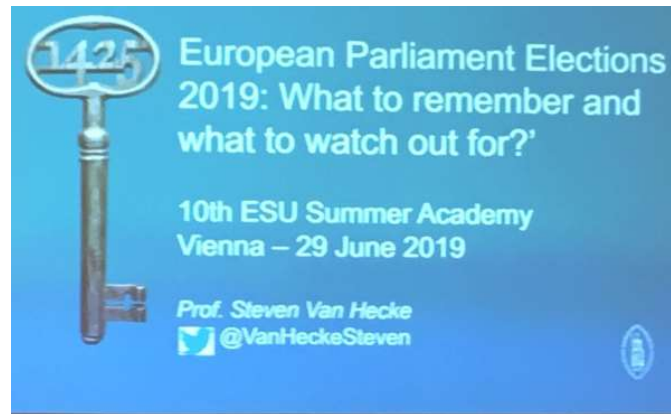
*Joseph Borelli, a Socialist minister from Spain, is scheduled to serve as EU High Representative (currently Federica Mogherini) and will probably also become Deputy Chief of the Parliament.*

*Christine Lagarde, the head of the IMF (International Monetary Fund), will in future be the head of the European Central Bank ECB (currently Mario Draghi).*

*The Social Democrat Franz Timmermans from the Netherlands who, like Manfred Weber, started as the Spitzenkandidat of their respective party families, will probably remain as a Vice-Commission chairman.*

*Margarethe Vestager from Denmark is also to become a Vice-Commission chairman. Until now she is a Commissioner. She competed as the Spitzenkandidat of the European Liberals.*

Following Van Hecke at the lecturn, **Frederico Ottavio Reho** pointed out that 15 (out of 28) EU member states had the most votes for EPP candidates. Among voters for the Christian Democratic and Conservative EPP candidates, the seniors were with 26 percent the biggest supporters. The EPP has excluded cooperation with the extreme right in Parliament. He wishes the EPP to have a "stronger pro-European strategy."



*Prof. Van Hecke's topic*

Discussion speakers raised their concerns about the electoral procedure (**Rolf Berend**, DE, a 97 cm long ballot paper), the preference for real European issues (**Leif Hallberg**, SE), the threats posed by Russia to the Baltic (**Zibartas Jackunas**, LT) and the "rougher-growing political discussion" and the role of Turkey (**Barbara Fischer**, DE).

In the second round of discussion, **Franz Karl**, AT, gave information about the heralds of BREXIT in the field of research funds in Wales that concern his son.

**Carmen Quintanilla Barba** (ESP) expects the EPP to place greater emphasis on freedom, democracy and human rights as indispensable values. BREXIT is "the biggest historical mistake of the United Kingdom".

**Antonis Demetriades** (CY) sees a special task in winning over many of his country's disillusioned youngsters, and warns "do not forget the unsolved Cyprus problem!"

Finally, **Van Hecke** stated: "it's not about more social media, but more social expertise and encounters of old and young," for which he was applauded.

**Mag. Danai Budas** from the Austrian Industrial Federation (pictured with moderator Heinz K. Becker) described the successful work of its member companies and focused on international relations in the event of the impending BREXIT.



Much attention was paid to a lecture by **Heinz K. Becker** about "the latest developments in social Europe". The former Member of the European Parliament stated at the outset: "we need the social Europe" and "we have to master climate change." With his statements, he started a lively discussion.

As the Summer Academy developed, the "country reports" were on the agenda. Secretary-General **Guido Dumon** gave all representatives of the member-associations the opportunity to supplement their written reports verbally, or to talk about their actions in the election campaign. Delegates from Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, Poland and Luxembourg made use of this



*Left in the picture: General-Secretary Guido Dumon*

Many experiences were discussed about contact with groups of the electorate who were won over for voting. The increase in turnout compared to 2014 was noted with relief.



*View in the conference room. From left: Vice-president Antonis Demetriades (CY), right: Claus Bernhold (DE), member of the Executive Committee and deputy chairman of the CDU-Seniors' Union.*

Having had the opportunity to discover the nearby Schönbrunn Palace on the first evening, on the second evening there was among others an unexpected encounter with **Dr. h.c. Edeltraud Paul**, who was on leave for a short time from the rehab clinic (after a serious fall while leading some seniors through the Parliament building!). She had until now organised the artistic pleasures on the fringe of the Summer Academies, and this time found worthy representatives in **Gertraud Pörtl** and **Helga Leitner** in the accompaniment of the guests to Schönbrunn.



*Maria Bellin-Moeris (CSP Eupen, BE) and Dr. h.c. Edeltraud Paul (ÖSB)  
A visit to the former Habsburg residential palace of Schönbrunn also includes the "Great Gallery", in which a festive dinner was held for Khrushchev and Kennedy on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1961, on the occasion of their summit meeting at the height of the Cold War.  
Two months later, the Berlin Wall was built.*

## "Dona nobis pacem"

On the morning of the third day of the event - Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> June - there was the opportunity to attend a Catholic Mass. In the course of which a spontaneously-formed choir, under the direction of **Rolf Berend** (DE), sang the canon "Dona nobis pacem" / "Grant us peace", during which peace was prayed for in six languages and was joined by **Guido Dumon**, who recalled those colleagues who had died since last summer. The sermon was based on a chapter from the Gospel of Luke (Jesus calls for unconditional following).

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Afterwards ESU Vice-president **Heinz K. Becker** came to the lectern again in the conference house called the "Fachwerkhaus" (*half-timbered house*). His theme "The EU's Migration Approach - a Challenge and an Opportunity" soon touched on the feelings, experiences and activities of most of the audience and other politically active citizens across Europe.

What are the differences between legal and illegal migration? What protection can those affected expect? How is help sought in the different European countries? The speaker gave convincing answers to these and other questions. And he was shocked, like most morally perceptive citizens, by the high number of drowned people in the Mediterranean and continuing



to be drowned. The units of Frontex, Becker said, did a better but still far from adequate job, but he expects to see some improvement in their area of responsibility.

In the discussion, questions arose such as integration (willingness and offers), the dangers of radical Islamism, problems with the repatriation of rejected asylum seekers, among whom are some who are already integrated.

**An Hermans** thanked all the speakers and in particular the last speaker for their detailed remarks, which also revealed shortcomings in political action and made confidence in the EU more difficult. It remains true: the European forms of dealing with one another, the moral values, should be preserved together and defended against all attacks. The President relies on the wealth of ideas and the will-power of the leading seniors' politicians gathered in Vienna.

The European Seniors' Electoral Congress, scheduled for 27<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup> September in Sandanski (Bulgaria), is expected to become another forum for member-associations' experience in the field of a "New Chapter", writes the Editor.



*Dr. Vaclav Roubal (CZ), former ESU Vice-president, and Vice-president Gabriele Peus-Bispinck (DE), during her discussion contributions. Vice-president Prof. Nikolai Andreev (BG), who had previously solicited participation in the ESU Congress in his homeland (27<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup> September in Sandanski), is on the left of Dr. Roubal.*

## Growth in the ESU family

The Presidium of the ESU discussed an application by the "Kovács K. Zoltan Seniors' Club Association" for membership of the ESU. It came to the decision to give the Seniors' Association an observer status first for one year. The communication to the Executive Committee was applauded by the two representatives of the group as well as by all in the plenary. The still relatively small seniors' association chaired by Ivanics Istvan from Szentendre was founded in 2012 and belongs to the Christian Democratic People's Party of Hungary, which is a member of the EPP. According to its membership request, it is represented in the national parliament by MPs.



*Tamas Szirmay and Laszlo Zoltan Zentai*



*The external lecturers are missing from the “family photo” of the Summer Academy*

## The Eastern Partnership (EaP) ...

.. requires further political and also financial support, according to the ESU Presidium. The basis is the summary of the first "Forum of Seniors' Associations and Initiatives of the Eastern Partnership" sent by Tatjana Zelko from Minsk, which was visited in April by An Hermans, Gabriele Peus-Bispinck and Ulrich Winz as representatives of the ESU ("SI" reported). The Czech member-association will be the first to make a donation to the organization "Our Generation" /" Nashe Pakalene" (with observer status in the ESU), which will be open to other people from ESU circles, said Vice-president Lidmila Nemcova in Vienna. President Hermans announced further considerations for cooperation, e.g. as partnerships of individual member associations.

## AGE remains active

The ESU is represented in the "AGE Platform" by **Leif Hallberg** (Sweden) and **Ghislaine Vanhalewyn** (Belgium). Hallberg, who is also an ESU Honorary Chairman, told the Presidium in Vienna about AGE's recent annual conference, which discussed the rights of the elderly in the context of current events in Europe. It is assumed that the results of the European elections could affect the political landscape. As a network of 106 European, national and regional members, AGE cares for over 40 million older citizens across the EU. For 2020, the agenda will focus on older age mobility activities (including tourism experiences), on improving the human rights situation (ending age discrimination), and on participation in social development (employment, active civic engagement among other possibilities).



*In the photo, right: Leif Hallberg (SE) is since many years our representative at AGE; next to him, Carmen Quintanilla Barba, Vice-president from Spain. She reported vividly*

*about the good progress of a Regional Conference in her home city of Ciudad Real; in the background: Yolande Van Droogenbroeck (BE) and Clode Carbon-Frisch (LUX)*

*Left picture: Monique Vogelaar from the CDA-Seniors in the Netherlands, speaking in the discussion.*

## ESU Calendar

(decisions of the Presidium and Executive Committee)

**27<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup> September:** SANDANSKI (Bulgaria) Election Congress of the ESU

New: **18<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> October:** BERLIN: meeting of the newly elected ESU Presidium with the CDU Chairman, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer

**6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> November:** BRATISLAVA: ESU Regional Conference

**20<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> November:** ZAGREB: participation of delegates and guests at the Congress of the European People's Party EPP



*Janusz Marszalek, Vice-President from Poland (centre of picture), in conversation with Margit Hawkes (PL), Carmen Quintanilla Barba (ESP), Zusanna Sucharda (PL) and one of the two very committed simultaneous interpreters*



### The Newsletter Team ...

... wish the recipients a very warm welcome and enjoyment when reading.

right and left: the translator-couple, Margit und Séan Hawkes  
centre of picture: the Editor

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#### **IMPRESSUM**

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