



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

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***"Standing up for Europe"***

*Impressions from the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress of the ESU  
in Bulgarian Sandanski / An Hermans again President*

**Sandanski (Bulgaria).** The Park Hotel "Pirin" in the spa town of Sandanski was the host for delegates and guests of the ESU Congress over two days in the last weekend of September. In her opening speech, President Prof. Dr. An Hermans emphasised that the venue for the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress in the history of the ESU, which is now beginning, was thanks to the insistence of her Bulgarian deputy, Vice-president Prof. Nikolay Andreev, and his GERB party. The decision for Sandanski, on the edge of the former Eastern Bloc which collapsed 30 years ago, and as a sign of solidarity with the Bulgarian seniors, has been the right one! This assessment



was one that most participants agreed with. Certain inconveniences with the long journey almost to the Greek border were soon forgotten. Hospitality at a high level, the feeling of solidarity and the charming landscape in the foothills of the Pirin mountains set the atmosphere for the discussions.



*Congress Praesidium from left: Leif Hallberg and Elisabeth Dispaux (Honorary Presidents), Heinz K. Becker, An Hermans, Nikolay Andreev*

Referring to the motto of the Congress, “Seniors standing up for Europe”, An Hermans noted: the citizens of Europe need a new perspective; they need to know and feel that Europe is a good and safe place to live and work. The ESU is looking forward to the first appointment of an EU Commissioner for Demography and Democracy with high expectations. Ursula von der Leyen has emphasised rightly that ageing affects all aspects of our society - “from the economy to the health system, from immigration to the climate - thus shaping our politics, society and culture and determining our place in the world”.





*Delegates from the Baltic countries*



*... from Armenia*



*... from the Republic of Cyprus*



*participants from the Czech Republic ....*



*... as well as Belarus and South Tyrol*

Two MEPs from Bulgaria were invited to speak about the future of our continent in global competition. For Eva Maydell, the development and mastery of new technologies is an important prerequisite for a successful existence among the competition. It is necessary to invest in talent, also to prevent their emigration, said the young lady, who is also President of the European Movement International.

Her colleague in Strasbourg and Brussels, Andrey Kovatchev, drew attention to the fact that the Congress location is on historical ground. Sandanski's history has been traced back to the Trakers and Spartacus. He spoke in favour of an open Europe, which is linked among other things by trade and service agreements. The West Balkan states should not be excluded from this. Besides that, he sees shortcomings in political education, which has led to misconceptions about the role of "Brussels".



*Eva Maydell in conversation with host Nikolay Andreev, and Andrey Kovatchev with An Hermans*

Another impression from the host country, which has been a member of the European Union since 2007 and held the Council presidency for half a year in 2018, came from Minister Rosen Emelianenko. Corresponding to its geographical location, his country sees itself as responsible for the expansion of pan-European transport corridors. As well as the construction of efficient roads and railways, also the upgrading of ports (Varna, Burgas) is in progress. Those Congress participants who travelled by bus were able to see for themselves the progress made in the development of the motorway network in the north-south direction.



*Minister of Transport Jeliazkov*

The Congress reassured renewed UN Security Council initiatives on the dangerous situation in the waters off Cyprus and expressed its support for solving the acute problem.

In accordance with the nature of the Congress, delegates noted and approved the financial report by Etienne Vanderroost about the legislature, in force since 2016, and granted a discharge to the Praesidium.

At the proposal of the Executive Committee from June this year, an amendment to the ESU Statute was adopted in Article 18, paragraph 18. The new regulation comes into effect for the first time during the preparation of the XI Congress (2022). It provides for five delegates from each member Association and, in addition, "an additional number of delegates per Association

based on the European political weight of the parent party”As Secretary-General Guido Dumon stated, with this change the ESU is following a European People's Party (EPP) rule that ensures greater fairness.

A further highlight of the Congress were

## ELECTIONS

Of the 165 valid votes cast, 162 were for Prof. Dr. An Hermans from Leuven (Belgium), who was almost unanimously re-elected President of the ESU for another three years. (Two votes were invalid, one delegate voted no).

As Vice-presidents, all 12 candidates - without exception with more than half of the valid votes cast - received the confidence of the delegates



*The new Praesidium of the ESU – without Vice-president Jozé Jurkovic (SLO) and Treasurer Etienne Vanderroost (B).*

*From left to right: Lidmila Nemcova (CZ), Manfred Hopfengärtner (DE/CSU). Prof. Nikolay Andreev (BG), Secretary-General Guido Dumon (B), Astrid Lulling (LU), Carmen Quintanilla Barba (ES), Heinz K. Becker (AT), President Prof. Dr. An Hermans (B), Dr. Gabriele Peus-Bispinck (DE/CDU), Antonis Demetriades (CY), Leena Jääskaläinen (FI), Dr. Christine von Stefenelli (IT/South Tyrol), Honorary President Leif Hallberg (SE), Ann Räämet (EE).*

Not standing again were: Roland Leek (SE), Janusz Marszalek (P), Zvonko Zinrajh (SLO) and Elke Garcyk (DE/CSU).

New in the Presidium are: Leena Jääskeläinen (FI), Astrid Lulling (LU), Manfred Hopfengärtner (DE/CSU) and Jozé Jurkovic (SLO), who is undergoing medical treatment following an accident.

The following were elected as financial auditors by acclamation: Clode Carbon-Frisch (LU), Roland Leek (SE), Dr. Edeltraud Paul (AT) and Ingeborg Uhlenbrock (DE).

At the inaugural meeting of the new Praesidium following the Congress, Secretary-General Guido Dumon (BE) and Treasurer Etienne Vanderroost (BE) were reappointed in their respective posts as proposed by President An Hermans.

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The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung surprised the Congress participants with an invitation to an information event about its activities in Bulgaria and world-wide. Director Thorsten Geissler also readily answered questions from the audience. He regretted that they were not allowed to operate in autocratic Belarus.



*Souvenir photo: An Hermans with delegates and guests from Poland*



*Delegates of both membership Associations from Germany*

Lectures and extremely lively and high-level discussions have confirmed that seniors are an “important part of society”, that the ESU family needs to make its voice heard. The elderly in society should be involved in all decisions aimed at greater unity and more democracy in Europe.

With the mutual singing of the European anthem, the 10<sup>th</sup> ESU Congress was brought to an atmospheric finale.

## **ESU Dates**

**18/19<sup>th</sup> October: Berlin (Konrad-Adenauer-Haus)**

Meeting of the Presidium with the CDU-Chairperson and German Defence Minister  
Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer  
as well as CDU Secretary-General Paul Ziemiak

**6-8<sup>th</sup> November: Bratislava**

Regional Conference  
“30 Years after the Peaceful Revolution in the former Czechoslovakia”

**19-20<sup>th</sup> November: Zagreb**

ESU will participate with delegates and guests  
at the Election Congress of the European People's Party (EPP)

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## **Preview of 2020:**

**Tallinn:** Regional Conference (no date yet)  
**Vienna:** 11<sup>th</sup> Summer Academy for Leading Seniors (middle of year)  
**Madrid:** “25 Years of the ESU” (autumn)

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### **IMPRESSUM**

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