



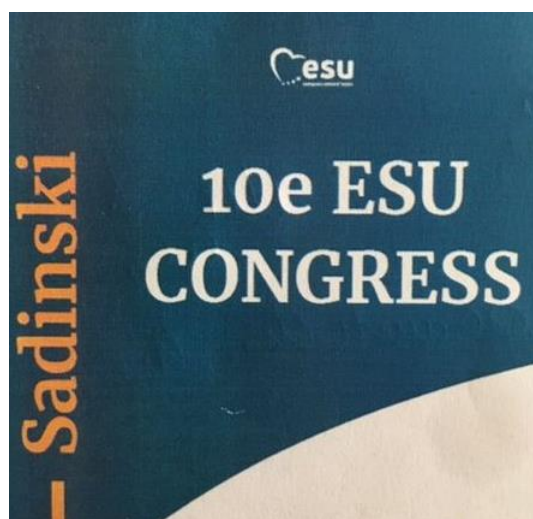
**EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)
EUROPÄISCHE SENIOREN UNION (ESU)**

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Creating unity in diversity with us

Resolutions in Sandanski provide impetus for further action

Sandanski (Bulgaria). The 10th ESU Congress (Report in Issue No. 173) made two decisions about the current political situation and to its positioning for future action. It was preceded by responsible discussions about individual sections, which speaks for the commitment of delegates and observers.



The "Sandanski Declaration"

notes that: the elections to the European Parliament have shown that citizens are very interested in politics and are ready to cast their votes. With the higher turnout, the legitimacy of the European institutions has also increased. In accordance with its

“Manifesto” in spring this year, the ESU urges the decision-makers to make their decisions based on core values such as peace, freedom and prosperity. The ESU urges more unity among the EU member states as a precondition for success in overcoming current problems. As examples, globalisation, security, climate change and migration flows were named.

The Declaration speaks with appreciation for all those who brought down the “Iron Curtain” 30 years ago. The ESU wanted to be inspired by them “in the sense of a more united and more democratic Europe”. And so it explains its readiness to contribute to the common European project of “Unity in Diversity”. The European Commission and Parliament are called on to “address problems that affect the daily lives of its citizens”. In this way, trust between institutions and the population can be restored. “An age-friendly society can only be achieved through multi-level initiatives”, it states in the Declaration.

Therefore, there is a plea for regular public discussions, in which every age and interest group may present suggestions for greater prosperity in their own country as well as throughout Europe. The shortcomings by the EU in communicating facts - including the implementation of their projects in many countries - must be eliminated. It is expected that populism resulting from false information will be fought.

Finally, it is stated that “only with joint forces” can the current challenges lead to political action - for the benefit of a better future, also for coming generations.

(The ESU will place the text of the “Declaration” on its website:)

Position Paper on Demographic Change

The new President of the European Commission is serious: demographic change will receive its due weight under Ursula von der Leyen. In her opening speech at the Congress, ESU President An Hermans emphasised what is now accepted: that changes in the population structure affect all sectors of society! Therefore, the appointment of Croatian Dubravka Šuica as Commissioner for Democracy and Demography



*Dubravka Šuica
photo: EPP*

is a good decision. A position paper adopted by Congress refers to the demands made by the EPP and the ESU, which are now being fulfilled (EPP Congress in Malta and the ESU Memorandum about the European elections).



ESU Congress: Prof. An Hermans on 27th September after her election as President with her closest colleague, Secretary-General Guido Dumon (both from the CD&V-Seniors), to whom these functions have been transferred again.

The ESU supports the needs, hopes and expectations of older citizens in a strong, inclusive society, it states in the Congress document. Politicians at all levels are called upon to act accordingly. It is about innovative and coordinated opportunities for social participation such as: active and healthy ageing, promotion of dialogue between the generations, lifelong learning and an economy appropriate for seniors (“the silver economy”). The needs and experiences of demographic change in different parts of Europe, where the ESU is present, should be discussed - “in preparation for a green-card for the elderly”.

The unanimously adopted document ends with an offer to “play an active part” in realising these goals.

(The wording of this Resolution, entitled “Demographic Change - one of the key challenges facing Europe”, will also be published on the ESU website.)



Mutual singing of the European anthem = commitment to a united Europe, for which Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) longed for: "all men become brothers."

Courage and determination appreciated

CDU Seniors' Union honours Hungarian politicians



*Miklós Neméth
photo: Wikipedia*

With a tribute to Miklós Neméth, the former Prime Minister of Hungary, the CDU Seniors' Union continued a good and people-unifying tradition on 14th October. Prof. Dr. Otto Wulff presented the politician with the highest decoration of his organisation: the Golden Medal for services of reconciliation and understanding among peoples. Németh had initiated the dismantling of border installations with Austria from May 1989. This courageous act enabled many Eastern European citizens to flee to the West. Neméth (born 1948) came from the reform wing of the Socialist Workers' Party. During his time as head of government (23.11.1988 - 23rd May 1990), it saw also the rehabilitation of the opposition politician Imre Nagy from the 1950s and the renaming of the People's Republic of Hungary (since 1949) to the Republic of Hungary.

The award was also presented to the then Hungarian ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany (1984-1991), Dr. István Horvath. Already on 16th March 1990, Federal President von

Weizsäcker had honoured his achievements with the Grand Cross of Merit with Star and Shoulder-band.



Französische Friedrichstadtkirche in Berlin-Mitte: west portal. photo: Wikipedia

Several years ago, the Chairman of the Seniors' Union awarded this honour to the former CPSU Secretary-General and later Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, the founder of perestroika and glasnost. Also commemorated is a tribute to two persons who set a mark of humanity in the inferno of the Stalingrad battle, among them a nurse.

Mostly - as in this year - the ceremony takes place in the Französische Friedrichstadtkirche in the heart of Berlin. It is not only - together with its counterpart on the other side of the square - a pearl of baroque architecture in the architecturally modest metropolis, but is also considered a testimony of Prussian tolerance. The church was and is a centre for Huguenots and their descendants, expelled for their faith.

A plaque commemorates the Edict of Potsdam of 1685, which regulated the admission of Protestant refugees in Prussia. Since its reconstruction in the 1980s, the Reformed (Calvinist) and a United church community worship here - sometimes together. This is where Aktion Sühnezeichen / Friedensdienste (Action Reconciliation / Service for Peace) feels at home, because it is regularly reminded of the victims of the Holocaust. Therefore, the Seniors' Union finds itself in good company in this place. All the more so because, at this very moment, the message is spreading that in Halle / Saale an obviously anti-Semitic motivated attack was committed, to which two people fell victim. It is Yom Kippur, the highest Jewish holiday.

Did nobody know about it?

What happened on 9th November, 1989 in the French church

The French Friedrichstadtkirche on Berlin's Gendarmenmarkt saw a remarkable event on the evening of 9th November, 30 years ago. It was announced as a community evening in the evangelical church. Its title: "the Parties, the Churches and the future of our country".

It was moderated by the president of the church authority ("consistory"), Dr. Manfred Stolpe, subsequently Prime Minister of the state of Brandenburg. The speakers included the

spokespersons of the established and the new GDR parties, as well as some civil rights campaigners.

After a microphone failed, one of the two representatives of the previous ruling party (SED = Socialist Unity Party of Germany) was offered the pulpit to speak from. He climbed up the stairs and, shaking his head, asked in the overcrowded church interior: “would this have been possible four weeks ago?” He was referring to the revolutionary situation in the GDR. This was to reach its peak during the same evening through the opening of the first border crossing points in Berlin.

The participants of the community evening had no knowledge of the simultaneous events in their city, as the jointly responsible Jörg Hildebrandt assured later. Mobile phones did not exist yet. So it cannot be ruled out that the Editor of this Newsletter was the only visitor to hear something about this world event from the mouth of a doorman, after a chance stopover at the CDU building opposite. The man had watched Western television at 19:00. In ZDF it said: “the GDR opens the borders”. At first it sounded implausible.

If there had been any press in the church, the events of the “night of nights”, as it was called soon afterwards, would have left no room in their pages for anything else for this comparatively insignificant event. The fall of the Berlin Wall caused the current discussion under a church roof practically to disappear. Hardly anyone remembers the optimistic mood of that evening, in which Lothar de Maizière also spoke. The following day he became the successor of Gerald Götting chairman of the (East) CDU; from mid-April until 2nd October 1990, he was the (last) head of government of the GDR, which he led into unity on 3rd October.

Additional photos from the ESU Congress



Luxembourg participants with Suzette Dostert, Clode Carbon-Frisch, host Nikolay Andreev (BG), ESU-President An Hermans (B), Astrid Lulling, Maisy Langenbach (from left to right)



Congress participants from CD&V-Seniors (Belgium)

IMPRESSUM

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