

OCTOBER 2020



Dear Colleagues,
Dear ESU Friends,

At once summer ended and we entered a new season... But we happily look back on the previous month September, a month very important to us; since our ESU resolution: *'Europe's Recovery Building the future of fair and resilient societies – including all generations'* was approved by the EPP Political Assembly (Pol. Ass.) on the 28th of September 2020.

Moreover, we were able to accentuate this message on the occasion of the *'International day of older persons'* on the first of October. The EPP once again gave us a helping hand by organising an interview on the priorities of the seniors and the challenges seniors are facing.

It couldn't be denied that this message about the role of seniors in society also radiated towards Nova Slovenija's anniversary event. We were 'digitally' present on 29th September at the ceremonial session of the Seniors union NSi. – Nova Slovenija.

Further on in this newsletter you can also reflect on the founding period of the ESU with some privileged witnesses.

We will report on all of the above in this newsletter. I hope you enjoy reading under a soft, healing autumn sun. Take the time to enjoy the richness of autumn....

We will be glad to welcome you all in our webinar on 6th November 2020 for which you have already got an invitation, and about which you will learn more in this Newsletter.

Kind regards.

An Hermans
ESU President

ESU & EPP join forces for better care and more support for Long-Term Care Facilities (LTCF)


The ESU took various initiatives to express the needs and rights of seniors during the pandemic. We were glad that we could count on the support of the EPP party. It took different forms, we happily elaborate on some in this update. More information is also available on our site.

ESU-EPP Resolution (28.09.2020)

It took a lot of cooperation, brainstorming, and planning, but we were proud to present in the EEP Political Assembly (28.09.2020) the results of our discussions, namely the ESU resolution on 'Europe's Recovery Building the future of fair and resilient societies – including all generations'. The adoption of the resolution by the EPP gives us hope that lessons will be learned from this tragic period, that the principle of ageism will disappear and that all citizens will be treated equally. Please read the EPP approved resolution [here](#).

International Day of Older Persons (1.10.2020)

The letter from our President about the 'International Day of Older Persons (IDOP)' was welcomed and supported by the president of the EPP, Donald Tusk. He commented: "The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is indeed taking a disproportionate toll on older people, in terms of lives lost, but also through the impact the restrictive measures in place are having on those among us who are less connected and less familiar with modern technologies. Our priority should now be to make our societies and our economies more resilient toward any future similar crisis and, in your letter, you have highlighted the way forward: solidarity, inclusion, respect for human dignity and the fight against discriminations."

 Furthermore, on the occasion of the IDOP and our letter, **the EPP invited An Hermans for an interview** with Sarah Pini, (Deputy Head of EPP President's Office). Several subjects on ageing and ageing policies were discussed during this conversation. You can find the interview [here](#). Using social media, this interview was further distributed, shared and watched.

"Older people, particularly those living in LTCF, have gone through a dramatic period. The whole environment was under pressure. Governments had to make decisions to protect their citizens and this often meant: no or limited social contact, no circulation, no visits to nursing homes. But this often created a situation of isolation and fear, partly due to the fact that older persons are not used to all kinds of means of communication. This dramatic situation was criticized, not only by older patients and their families, but also by human rights organizations." - An Hermans during the interview (01.10.20)

ESU greetings to the Seniors union NSI-Nova Slovenija.



Our president An Hermans was 'digitally' present at the ceremonial session of the Seniors union NSi. – Nova Slovenija, founded in 2004. The event was linked to the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the party Nova Slovenija.

President Hermans addressed the seniors through a video message. See our website for more information about this event.

Videoconference on 06.11.2020

We are glad to invite you on the 6th of November 2020 for an ESU video meeting from 10h30 to 12h30. The invitations are sent already. We hope you will participate in this programme, connected with the history of our organisation, founded almost 25 years ago, but also...directed to the challenges of the future and hoping that next year we are able to organise a joyful festive celebration with and for all those who made and are making our ESU today and tomorrow.

The program:

10:30 – 11:00: Commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the ESU

Welcome **An Hermans** (ESU-president)

Introduction and greetings **Antonio López-Istúriz** (EPP Secretary General, MEP):

11.00 – 12:30: Conference with central guest: Prof Dr. Christiane Woopen.

Title: ' Let's be guardians of an ethical dimension of politics' (Donald Tusk)

- Introduction: An Hermans
- Lecture (30 min) by Prof Dr. C. Woopen -*Reflections on healthcare and political acting during the pandemic; reflections and lessons to be learned about older persons rights in emergency periods-*
- Panel: moderated by **Prof Dr. Steven van Hecke** (Kuleuven)
- Final comments: Prof. Dr. C. Woopen
- Conclusions: An Hermans

12:30: End of the conference.

Christiane Woopen is chair of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies and professor of ethics and theory of medicine at the University of Cologne. [See the EGE Statement on European Solidarity and the Protection of Fundamental Rights in the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)

The final program will follow soon.

Please let us know if you can attend this video meeting by **October 31th**.

Reflections on the 25th anniversary of the ESU

This year, in November 2020, the ESU celebrates its 25th anniversary. Normally, we would celebrate this with a festive gathering in Madrid. Unfortunately this event cannot take place because of the COVID-19 crisis. However, we do not want this celebration to go unnoticed and therefore asked in our September Newsletter for some personal testimonies on ESU's role. Also in the next Newsletter we will share some reflections with you.

'The ESU is my family' stated our Greek colleague, Honorary President and former Vice-President Maria Kanellopoulou. She and many of our colleagues are always happy to come together to find a listening ear and a warm heart to exchange all the good news, the sadness and the worries... We are all looking forward to meeting next year to celebrate our postponed ESU 25th anniversary.

In the meantime, we like to reflect on our history. An important source is Jeroen Teugels master's thesis at the University of Göttingen. *'Seniors, party politics and the European Union: 20 years European Seniors' Union (ESU)'* from 2016, but of course everyone who participates in the history of the ESU has a unique & shared story. All our archives are kept in the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Sankt-Augustin and recently Elisabeth Dispaux-Cornil sent us some documents and photographs from the early beginnings of the ESU. These will be taken to Sankt-Augustin to be included in the ESU archives.

For this Newsletter we are glad to share with you the 'testimonies' from two important actors: **Bernard Worms & Heinz Becker**. Please enjoy reading them.

Observations which led to the creation of an E S U – and first political decisions within the ESU during the two legislative periods of Stefan Knafel (1995 to 2001) and Dr. Bernhard Worms (2001 to 2013)

Dr. Bernhard Worms



Madrid 7th November 1995 The goal is achieved:
The “European Seniors’ Union” is established as an independent Association within the European People's Party (EPP)!

The at times frantic discussions in the political and social environment in Europe in the 1970s, triggered by the 'Generation of 68', did not stop at the generation of seniors.

Here in Germany, it was in the state of Baden-Württemberg, whose Prime Minister, Lothar Späth, took statements by the University of Freiburg im Breisgau, and especially those of Prof. Karl Hugo Härringer, very seriously and in his home state, as well as at the federal board of the CDU Germany, he made a sustained effort to establish an independent association within the CDU which would deal exclusively with the concerns of senior citizens.

Similar efforts in this direction were also made in other European countries.

I know this because, as chairman of the then Rhineland CDU, I wanted to set up an office in Aachen in 1980 for the important Belgian statesman, Leo Tindemans, when he was the first chairman (1979-1986) of the EPP. I discussed with him in great detail about the idea of no longer defining our society as a three-generation society, but as a five-generation society!

Mr Tindemans was very attracted to these ideas!

In Germany, at the 1985 Essen Federal Party Congress, it was decided to set up the party's own association, the “SENIORS – UNION” by an amendment to the party's statutes. Three years later, on 20th April 1988, the regional Associations of the Seniors' Union, which had been set up in the German Länder in the meantime, met in Bonn's Konrad Adenauer House to set up the German Seniors' Union in the presence of the party's chairman, Dr Helmut Kohl.

Just over a year later, at the end of 1989, it was Dr Kohl who, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, in his deliberations on the formation of a European Union, drew particular attention to the importance of the older generation (the Second World War and its consequences) for the future of Europe. In 1990 he gave me the task, as the newly-elected Federal President of the Seniors' Union, to make an immediate and very sustained effort to ensure that a seniors' association within the EPP on European soil will be established.

After nearly five years of discussion, particularly among Belgian, Luxembourg, Austrian and German seniors, all of whom had been sent by their home countries to set up an independent seniors' association within the EPP, and with the approval of the EPP (a decision of the Executive Committee), the EPP decided that on

7th November 1995 in MADRID, the European Seniors’ Union (E S U) was established.

The most important decisions in the young E S U during the phase of its construction and expansion:

(This includes the two terms of office of former deputy Governor Stefan Knafli (1995 to 2001) and former State Secretary Dr Bernhard Worms (2001 to 2013)).

Discussion and resolution of a “MAGNA – CHARTA” as the foundation of an ESU

Triggered by many contributions to the discussion in the preparatory phase, we decided unanimously at a regional conference in Riga to draw up a policy paper to which everyone who wanted to become a member must commit to a **“Magna – Charta”**.

This contains statements about who we are, what we want, our commitment to a Christian view of humanity, including the commitment to God and his commandments, especially to the inviolable dignity of the human being, and about our individual goals in the areas of society that concern us particularly.

To build up an adequate pension scheme and secure its purchasing power when it is paid out years later.

Combating poverty in old age is the goal here!

The focus of social policy in every EU Member State must be to build up a reliable pension scheme for working people and secure its purchasing power in later life!

“Creation is entrusted to you!”

Scientists warn: there is no more time to waste, environmental protection is an integral part of every economic activity.

The present bears the responsibility for a liveable and caring future for our children.

Only the “social market economy” ensures prosperity for all

Peaceful coexistence between peoples on this earth is only possible when the same economic and social order prevails everywhere. If its contents and precepts are respected and observed by all nations, we will solve the two most important economic objectives on this earth:

we do not continue to plunder nature in the search for raw materials and products for sale (deforestation of the rainforests), and that we offer products to everyone that are affordable and also renewable at any time.

Friedrich Schiller: “Man is free even if he would have been born in chains!”

Our political goal is and remains: peace in freedom!

To feel responsible as a fellow human being for the private and public sphere requires that I can shape my life in freedom according to my ideas. For living together, the “commandment of love” applies, which has been given to us in the Christian religion as a 'new commandment'! Each person's personal responsibility begins and ends at the limits set by the commandment: “you shall love your neighbour as yourself”.

“War is the continuation of politics by other means!”

We reject firmly this 19th century phrase!

The following applies to the ESU: conflicts must be resolved in the spirit of the values of each individual and must never end in actions which we reject consistently because our generation, in particular, has experienced war as a life- and civilisation-destroying process.

We take very seriously the reminder of 50 million dead in the two World Wars of the 20th century.

We are committed to a European Union in which all the nations and countries that we count historically as part of Europe have and retain their final home

We seniors in the ESU demand from all Member States that they create a common order within which a **majority rule** decides on controversial issues and which, moreover, feels bound in all individual cases to a living standard that never betrays or abandons the spiritual and cultural values of a Christian Europe.

Today, when – without a pandemic – we would be celebrating our 25th anniversary of the ESU, I am pleased to be able still to work in a strong ESU and to see that, with our growing recognition within the EPP, our diverse work is transmitted.

This also applies to other, large societal groups which are committed to caring for the elderly! This is why our President, Prof. An Hermans, rightly says: “we work because all our efforts have only one goal: to assist senior citizens and empower older people, so that we can remain autonomous and dignified and work together for ourselves and for society's future”.

Dr. Bernhard Worms
(former President of the ESU)

25 YEARS OF ESU A SUCCESS STORY FOR YOUNG & OLD IN EUROPE

Heinz K. Becker
Vice-President ESU



- Why is the ESU so important?

As a leading force in European seniors' policy, the ESU is fully anchored in the values and principles of the European People's Party; since a quarter of a century, the ESU network of 34 member organizations in 27 countries has successfully represented a large population group of older people in society, actively promoting the interests and rights of seniors at all political levels and in all relevant subject areas, in particular anti-discrimination and upholding of respect and dignity; it supports intergenerational justice and dialogue between young and old in full solidarity, participation in social security, active ageing, lifelong learning, initiatives in healthcare and nursing, as well as the role of seniors as the largest purchasing-power group in the silver economy.

- Recollections related to the ESU:

Commendable Austrians have made a significant contribution to the development of the European Seniors' Union: on the initiative of the first President, Stefan Knafl, and the Secretary-General Willi Mohaupt, the ESU was founded in Madrid in 1995; financial consultant Walter Paul managed the secured economic foundation, and Vice-President Marilies Flemming made the annual Summer

Academy in Vienna's Polak into an important tradition; Heinz K. Becker could succeed her in the European Parliament, and meanwhile also contributes with his engagement as Vice-president.

In the new term of office, the Austrian Seniors' Union President, Ingrid Korosec, together with around 300,000 members as the largest organization in Europe, is promoting cooperation actively in and with the ESU, professionally and dynamically supported by Secretary-General Markus Keschmann.

- [Support and inspiration in the observation of European politics and on the functioning of our organization through the ESU over the years:](#)

A valuable source for its own concepts and strategies is the programmatic work of the ESU with a pan-European perspective, as it was led at a high level by President Bernhard Worms and continued by President An Hermans, always keeping up with the times, providing the seniors-related political substance that is documented with manifestos and resolutions in the many congresses and conferences. The most recent proof of success: the ESU resolution "Europe's Recovery: building the future of fair and resilient societies – including all generations", which focuses on the future after the pandemic, was adopted by the EPP's General Assembly in autumn 2020 with an overwhelming majority, and will therefore shape the politics of the whole Party in a very concrete manner in the near future. Europe's seniors want and should be involved in mastering the great challenges of our time - from climate change to migration, radicalization and threats to digitization - and to shape the solutions of the future with maximum generational solidarity.

Seniors on social media

We are glad to closely follow the activities of various of our Member Associations. [Kansallinen senioriliitto ry](#) (Finland) made great efforts to instruct their seniors how to connect online and now they are reaping the benefits of these training sessions. Our Finnish colleagues report the following:

Matti Niiranen: *"The National Seniors' Union in Finland ([Kansallinen senioriliitto ry](#)) is privileged, since our members have wanted to learn how we can meet online and how the Teams-app functions. We are proud of this, since the average age among our members is 76 years. The National Seniors' Union in Finland has a Congress every three year. Because of COVID-19 we had to cancel our Congress in June 2020. It will be organised on 18th of November 2020 online, it is the first time for us to have an online Congress. All of our 159 local associations will be represented in the Congress via Teams-app..."*

On the local level COVID-19 has been most harmful. Our associations have not been able to arrange activities in the normal scale, such as weekly meetings, trips, cultural events, hobbies and clubs. Normally we annually have around 12 800 local club meetings. This year this number will be much smaller. However, fortunately some club meetings, other activities and outdoor activities have been carried out.

We have been very busy in helping our members with internet issues and assisting them to organise online activities.”

Leena Jääskeläinen: *“For me it was very interesting to chair the meeting of our board while staying at home above the Arctic circle, in Rovaniemi, and the members taking part from all around Finland. With the help of the people in our office in Helsinki and with the Teams app, it was easy.*

During next week we’ll have training sessions for club members on moderating the websites of their clubs. We are learning how to keep contact with our members during this pandemic time.

But we should never forget the meetings in face to face situations with shaking hands and hugs.”

Upcoming events:

Proposed events for 2021:

- Regional Conference in Tallinn (proposed by vice-president Ann Räämet)
- 25th Anniversary in Madrid (proposed by vice-president Carmen Quintanilla)