

## You are wonderful!

Dear colleagues and friends,

In the past few months, most of us were able to return to "normal" after a far-reaching pandemic period with many sufferings and restrictions. We were all happy to resume - under certain conditions - our ESU meetings, and what meetings! Our ESU vice-president Carmen Quintanilla was happy to welcome us to Madrid (23-25 Sept.) for a triple ESU event: a celebration of the 25th anniversary of our association. An extraordinary congress with the adoption of our resolution on media and information literacy for all and a roundtable discussion with highly qualified speakers on the EU's challenges for the future... We had very interesting, and joyful encounters in the sunny and festive city of Madrid. On Sunday (25 Sept.) we also had the opportunity to get some impressions of the city. We visited the Royal Palace & the Cathedral. All participants went home with good memories and joyful feelings.

For me, as President of the ESU, one of the most impressive feelings was to experience how seniors from all over Europe look to the future together and are motivated to build a safe and peaceful future for their children and grandchildren. In addition, there was an extra big surprise for me. Namely to see and feel what wonderful people you are. You all knew that I had turned 77 during our events and... You chose to celebrate my birthday in all kinds of ways. With wishes and sweets, with flowers and presents... I was amazed at the welcome dinner with a birthday cake and speeches, but also when I got home, I received all kinds of gifts in my mail. I still enjoy it every day, thank you, it is nice to feel appreciated as a president by the people who matter to me!

In this Newsletter we look at the events within the ESU during September & October. The focus was of course the Madrid Congress, but there was also the 1st of October: United Nations International Day of Older Persons (UNIDOP): 'Digital Equity for All Ages'. Furthermore, our ESU participated in a virtual way in the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Kansallinen senioriliitto ry and was represented in Cyprus for several meetings and for an event in the University of Nicosia to mark the UNIDOP. Also, we went to Champion for a meeting of the Aînés du cdH.

We hope you enjoy our newsletter.

Your president,  
An Hermans



# ESU-Madrid-Congress 23-25 September 2021: A triptych in Madrid

## → ‘Building the future together’: Seniors focusing on EU’s political priorities



On 23-25 September, the ESU was finally able to celebrate its 25th anniversary after a one-year delay. For this purpose, we met in Madrid, the venue was well chosen because it was also in Madrid that the organization was founded in 1995. It was a warm gathering with our ‘Christian democratic family’ after

being separated for so long by the COVID-19 pandemic. ***“Building the future together”***. Our message was loud and clear at the congress in Madrid; read the report of the congress [here](#). In this report, we highlighted some aspects of the Congress programme: the reflection and discussions on the future of the EU, “A quarter of a century of active senior citizenship” and we held a roundtable discussion. It was moderated by ESU vice-president Heinz Becker. We welcomed speakers from different backgrounds: health, digitalization & climate change:



- **Marina Troncoso Rodríguez:** President of CAUMAS (confederation of associations of the University Programs for the Elderly);
- **Juan Manuel Martínez Gómez:** Geriatrician, president of CEOMA (Spanish confederation of seniors organizations);
- **Patrick Penninckx:** Council of Europe, Head of Information Society Department;
- **Carlo Giacomo Angrisano:** Former chairman EDS. Secretary general of “Nuevas Generaciones del Partido Popular”.

## → A quarter of a century of active senior citizenship: we are grateful & celebrate

The ESU Congress in Madrid was a celebration that served as a sharpening of our focus on the future. In 1995 the first ESU-Congress took place in Madrid. ESU vice-president Carmen Quintanilla was proud to welcome the participants again in the Spanish capital after a quarter of a century of tumultuous European developments and intensive seniors' involvement in political decision-making.

We had the honor of welcoming some high-level speakers from the socio-political world. ESU Vice President Carmen Quintanilla was proud to host them:

- Mr. **Pablo Casado**, President of the Partido Popular;
- Mr. **Borja Fanjul**, City Councillor of Madrid speaking for José Luis Martínez Almeida, Mayor of Madrid;
- Mr. **Wilhelm Hofmeister**, Director Konrad Adenauer Foundation for Spain and Portugal;
- Mr. **Antonio López-Istúriz**, MEP and Secretary-General of the EPP.



We were happy that we could offer the audience some testimonies of leading persons from 'the first years' of the ESU: Elisabeth Dispaux-Cornil, Bernhard Worms & Leif Hallberg shared their story about the ESU history via [a video message](#). These were part of the 25th anniversary celebrations at the Madrid Congress. In addition to these testimonials, we also received many wishes, either online or in person, please read the report of the proceedings on

[our website](#).



## → ESU Extraordinary Congress



The celebration of the 25th anniversary of the ESU in Madrid was coupled with an Extraordinary Congress. It took place on 24th September in the afternoon. Our president An Hermans opened the afternoon session with hopeful words for a future-oriented ESU: *"Standing together and looking in a same direction, we can build a strong, resilient and sustainable future: without discrimination, without ageism & in solidarity."*

We started with the amendments to the ESU Statutes and Rules of Procedure. The presentation of the proposed changes for the ESU Executive Committee, questions from the delegates & the final vote on the changes, all this was prepared and moderated by our Secretary General Guido Dumon. One of the changes affecting the functioning of the ESU is the shift in the timing of the election of the Presidency. Read more about the Extraordinary Congress on [our website](#).

# 1st October: United Nations International Day of Older Persons: 'Digital Equity for All Ages'

**A message from our president on the occasion of the 1<sup>st</sup> of October: United Nations International Day of Older Persons (UNIDOP): 'Digital Equity for All Ages'**



Since 1990, the UN has designated 1 October as a day to remember the older generation. This year's theme is 'Digital Equity for All Ages'. It is based on the need for access to and meaningful participation in the digital world for everyone, and especially for older people. This topic is more relevant to us than ever and omnipresent in everything we organize within the organization. Read our president's message on the occasion of this festive day on our [website](#).

## 50th anniversary of Kansallinen senioriliitto ry (FI)

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of our Finnish Member-Association: Kansallinen senioriliitto ry, our President An Hermans made a video message, which can be found [here](#).

The video message was shared during their celebration event (10 Oct.), also a beautiful book was made to commemorate their half century anniversary!

*"Together, we will build a resilient and sustainable future, in which people are at the center and which is based on the values and pillars of a just and democratic society, a social market economy in which no one is left behind, inclusive societies, in which we care for each other, in which family and people of all generations are happy to live and work, enjoy and protect nature, knowing ... that tomorrow, too, we cannot take the fundamental values of our societies for granted and that we must continue on the path we have embarked on, standing for Europe, standing for resilient, just and democratic societies." - An Hermans*



## Our ESU was welcomed in Cyprus: What a week!



Our ESU Vice-President Antonios Demetriades, who is also the President of the Senior Citizens Organization of Cyprus (OSCC), invited ESU President An Hermans and Secretary-General Guido Dumon to participate in an event to mark the *United Nations International Day of Older Persons* (UNIDOP) and to make some contacts with leading

persons in politics to discuss policy issues related to older people. It was about: long-term care, fighting poverty and loneliness, cooperation between generations, digitalization...

We exchanged views about the role of seniors in society, their active participation, and their need for care with Averof Neophytou and Harris Georgiades, President and Vice President of the political party DISY. They both underlined the important role of seniors in their party and the importance of cooperation at the European level when it comes to geopolitical problems. In Limassol, - 'the most southern city of the EU' according to Savvas Stouppas- we visited a non-governmental initiative to respond to psychological and cultural needs of seniors. Very interesting was the visit to the University and the clear proposal of Prof. Panayiotis Zaphiris, rector of the Technical University of Limassol to develop activities together. We will certainly explore this idea further. We had several visits and exchanges with local board members of seniors' associations speaking about their activities in the association and telling what several decades of Turkish occupation in the North of Cyprus meant for their personal life and that of their families.



Our visit to Kyriacos Kokkinos, Deputy Minister to the President and responsible for Research, Innovation and Digital Policy, took us to the heart of our recent concern about "digital equality for all". The minister explained the ambitious plan to optimise digital participation for all and how seniors will be able to take advantage of the support and coaching offered in local communities.



The "highlight" of the whole week was a meeting in a large auditorium "Cine Studio" of the University of Nicosia on the occasion of the UNIDOP. Our host was Prof. Constantinos N. Phellas, Vice-Rector of the University. The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Annita Demetriou took the event under her wing. An important delegation of Cypriot seniors and representatives from the political, economic, and cultural sectors of society gathered and enjoyed several speeches that all emphasized the role of seniors and the need for

cooperation between generations to develop a sustainable, fair and inclusive society. Professor An Hermans, one of the speakers, addressed the role of the EU in tackling demographic change. And... as ESU Vice-President Antonios Demetriades said "We are sure that these recent meetings will certainly have repercussions for the ESU, at the European level as well as in Cyprus." We thank our Cypriot friends for making this all possible

# Extraordinary and Statutory General Assembly of 'les Aînés du cdH' (BE)

This meeting (18 October 2021) was particularly focused on the renewal of the Presidency of the *Aînés du cdH*. The Letter of application and motivation from André Bosly (picture) for the Presidency of the



*Aînés du cdH* can be found [here](#) (in French). Thank you Mr. Pierre Scharff for your dedicated services as former President of *Aînés du cdH*. We are pleased to welcome Mr. Bosly to our Executive Committee.

Furthermore, reflections on the new movement created in their party '*Il fera beau demain*' (tomorrow will be a better day) were discussed. It handles the new challenges in society.

The ESU presidency was invited to Champion (Namur) where the event took place and we had the pleasure to listen to these interesting speakers:

- Leila Belkhir, infectiologist at the Cliniques universitaires Saint Luc in Woluwe
- Violaine Wathelet, political secretary of Enéo