

Determined

*First spring flowers find their way to the light,
capture the shine of the sun
and turn to a new season determinedly.*

Young life springs everywhere.

In color and sound.

Determined.

Let us join that determination.

*Grateful to support the young impulses
and to face a new season together.*

*Let 's draw traces of hope
and trust and share
the joy of the new season.*

Together.

Determined.

I wish you a pleasant reading.

*An Hermans
ESU President*



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Invitation to participate in the consultation on *'The Green Paper on Ageing'*

"In the last 50 years, our life expectancy at birth has increased by about 10 years. This creates new challenges and opportunities, and we want to open a debate with you." - European Commission The [Green Paper](#) on Demographic Change: a momentum in Europe's policy on ageing

With demographic change causing Europe's population to age, this green paper will seek to launch a wide public debate on this issue.



The green paper will:

- set out the key issues related to ageing
- discuss possible ways to anticipate and respond to the socioeconomic impacts of Europe's ageing population.

The Commission would like to hear your views.

Through public consultations you can express your views on aspects of EU laws and policies before the Commission finalises its proposals.

You can find the consultation [here](#).

Save the date: 23 March 2021 - 11:00 – 12:30

keynote speaker Patrick Penninckx

Title of the Video Meeting: *“The era of digitalization: from communication highways to disinformation and infodemic. Opportunities and potential risks”*

How to participate in today’s digital society? Which are the opportunities for older persons? Is the ‘digital society’ taking into account the ‘competences and skills’ of older persons and their rights to participate? How to create ‘room for all generations’ in this information society of longevity?

These questions have been around for a long time in the European senior generation. More than ever, digitalisation has been shown to help support and reach older people during the COVID-19 crisis, but also that the digital gap between generations is significant and increases with age.

We have gathered for you a number of experienced speakers in this field:

Patrick Penninckx is Head of the Information Society Department at the Council of Europe. He will give a keynote speech in which he discusses the digital technology that is at hand today, its opportunities and risks, the need for ethical standards in this field and... He will also try to answer the question: "what's in it for us" (the seniors)?

Sophie Michaelides, Government, Political and Corporate Communications Expert – PR, Media and Marketing Strategist, will be discussing her experiences with ‘The use of digital technology in the relationship between politicians and citizens’.

Ivo Belet is Deputy Head of Cabinet to Vice President of the European Commission in charge of Democracy and Demography Dubravka Šuica.

A meeting to remember: 16.02

ESU Video Meeting with Mrs Dubravka Šuica

In mid-February we were honored to welcome Mrs **Dubravka Šuica**, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Democracy and Demography at our video conference. Although the gathering was planned before the launch of ‘The Green Paper on Ageing’, on the 27th of January 2021, this was an interesting windfall.

Vice-President Šuica did high light some of the Commission's initiatives, with emphasis on her own achievements. Being information on the Commissions' COVID-19 response: *"We have designed a European gateway to enable interoperability of COVID-19 tracing apps across Europe. We proposed an ambitious, forward-looking EU4Health programme. And we are building the first steps towards a European health union."*



For more information on the event and the speech of Mrs Dubravka Šuica, check our report on the website.

'InvolveEU fund'

In the second part of the conference professor Van Hecke gave us some insight concerning 'How to involve citizens in European politics'. This topic is closely related to the 'involveEU fund' which is managed by Professor Van Hecke. For more information on this interesting initiative see the involveEU website.

ESU making older persons' voice heard

As you know, as a member association of the EPP, we are closely linked to their activities and this is expressed, among other things, in the cooperation during the 'working groups'. Therefore, we would like to give you an update on working group 1.

Status information on the process of EPP Working Group 1 for the value document

"The Europe we want to build"

The EPP headquarter is preparing a new value document for the coming EPP Congress end of 2021 in Rotterdam **updating the EPP Programme adopted at the Congress in Bukarest 2012.**

Working Group 1 consists of members from all EPP Parties and organisations, including ESU, and is presently dealing with the amendments. The final draft of the EPP document will be decided after the summer and will be discussed and adopted by the Congress Plenary which is presently scheduled for November.

ESU is represented by Vice president Heinz K. Becker on behalf of President An Hermans and has already delivered various amendments in the interests of the older generations in Europe, among those pointing out the relevant topics:

- **Human Rights, active citizenship, LifeLong Learning, health and (long term) care, prevention, silver economy, the EU Pillar of Social Rights, generations solidarity, etc.**
- Supported by the Working Group's chair Esther de Lange there will be included a **separate chapter on "Ageing" to deal with the demographic challenges and their consequences in future.**

The next meeting of Working Group 1 is scheduled for March 2nd 2021.

President An Hermans participates in **Working Group 3** about membership of the EPP. Secretary General Guido Dumon participates in **Working Group 2 & 4**, focusing on external relations, economics and digital society.

News from our ESU family & Other News

[EPP Podcast with An Hermans](#)

Our president An Hermans was invited for a Podcast with Sara Pini From the EPP - European People's Party. 10 interesting questions were asked about the ESU and our operation.

What can seniors bring to the political debate and decision-making?

"The most important thing is their experience, their openness towards the future and their inexhaustible willingness to work with young people.

But... Very often we see that when it comes to decision-making, senior citizens are no longer involved in the process... The real decision-making process is the 'prerogative' of 'professionals'... It depends solely on the good will of the decision-makers whether and how seniors can be involved..." - An Hermans

 Listen to this episode at this [link](#).



[Video speech by our president for CDA's event : 'The good life'](#)

Our colleagues from the Netherlands, CDA-Senioren, organised on 12 February a webinar with 600 participants, about 'The good live' in preparation of the coming national parliamentary elections. There were interesting speeches about housing, income, healthy lifestyle... and of course also about EUROPE. MEP Toine Manders talked about his parliamentary work, with a special focus on the recovery process after the pandemic. President An Hermans explained how ESU voices the needs and aspirations of seniors at the European level.

[Here](#) you can look at the webinar (in Dutch)



ESU-President's grandchildren were watching (for some minutes...) the meeting with great interest!

[Launch of the brochure 'Demographic changes in Slovenia and Europe' \(Martens Centre - INAK\)](#)

In 2020, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies and the Anton Korošec Institute conducted the joint project '*Demographic changes in Slovenia and Europe*'. They hereby aimed to shed light on some of the demographic issues in Slovenia and Europe and to open a wider public debate on how we will live differently in the future.

Martens Centre decided to take on this project noticing that Slovenia, as well as a vast majority of EU countries and regions, is facing a worrying demographic development, driven by declining birth rates and an increase in life expectancy overall, and youth emigration in rural areas in particular.



On Monday, 22 February, a webinar was held for the launch of the Brochure, co-organized by the Institute of Dr. Anton Korošec and the Wilfried Martens Center for European Studies. An Hermans participated; she emphasised that *“There is a need for practical solutions and that it is essential to exchange views and experiences in finding them”*.

More information:

- Check out the Brochure [here](#)
- [Demographic Changes in Slovenia and Europe](#)
- [Are we mature enough to talk about demographics?](#)

Letter from Ulrich Winz

Mr. Ulrich Winz was for years the editor of ‘Senior International’ and brought news about ESU and member associations. Last year in 2020 Mr. Winz finished his long time volunteering as an editor of Senior International. But ... his interest and involvement in our association is of course still there. Recently he addressed a letter to us. We share a part with all our ESU-friends

... Since the beginning of the Pandemie last year everyone is asked for overtaking a task for other people.

I am glad still to have the opportunity to continue my journalistic/publicistic work: It means the edition of the newsletter "Sorauer Land und Niederlausitz", in polish language "Ziemia Zarska i Dolne Luzyce" - every month (already 80 numbers), sent as an E-Mail to more than 200 persons in Germany and Poland. Since a half year it developed into a little "project from the ESU", because the issues are translated from my mother's tongue into the polish language by Janusz Marszalek,



President of the Polish Unity of Seniors and one of his colleagues - Mrs. Zusanna Sucharda from Warsaw, who was a visitor of one of our ESU-events, got interest in our Organization and grew to a "comrade-in-arms" for Mr. Marszalek.

Let us continue our honorary works for the healthy and prosperity of all people and especially for the Seniors in Europe! All the best for the participants of the conference and the other colleagues which I became acquainted with...

Position Paper: 'Together against loneliness and social isolation'



Our colleague Claus Bernhold, *Vice President of the Seniors' Union of the CDU*, informed us about an interesting 'Position Paper' on the fight against loneliness.

The restrictions and limitations imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic reduced for many seniors the - often already limited - meetings and contacts with family, friends and fellow citizens. *"A central goal of this strategy is to support people to live self-determined lives and participate in society into old age. Loneliness and social isolation should become a focus of our social and political work. We must intensify research, launch programmes and develop new concepts for a counter-strategy."* Said Katharina Landgraf: from the CDU/SCU parliamentary group, which is proposing a number of initiatives to tackle this new social problem. We thank our colleague for sharing this text. It will certainly inspire us.

More background information regarding the paper can be found [here](#) and the position paper itself [here](#).

Civil Solidarity Prize

The National President of AFAMMER and Vice-President of ESU, Carmen Quintanilla, receives the Civil Solidarity Prize awarded by the European Economic and Social Committee to AFAMMER in recognition of GRAN RED RURAL SOLIDARIA which has made an exceptional contribution to the fight against COVID-19 and its disastrous consequences.

"When the world was paralyzed and confined, at AFAMMER we decided to bring out our more human side, more united and more committed to those who needed us. I want to feel this award as a tribute to the more than 190,570 women who are part of AFAMMER, as well as the thousands of seniors to whom in many cases we have not been able to say goodbye the way they deserved "

Link to the press release :

[20210215_afammer_receives_civil_solidarity_award_from_european_ecosoc_comittee_es.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://www.europa.eu/press-room/media/30612/20210215_afammer_receives_civil_solidarity_award_from_european_ecosoc_comittee_es.pdf)

Link to the video of the EESC Prize-giving ceremony :

<https://wetransfer.com/downloads/8edc2c55062c69dc52494dbd92dd320a20210215100649/160ef1>



SKS, our Czech partner, is demonstrating 'active European citizenship'

The Conference "To the Future of Europe" planned for mid 2021 is just being prepared in the Czech Republic. Activities are shared by the Czech NGO working groups, each of about 30 people. The Christian Seniors Association is represented in some of them by its President Lidmila Němcová and by other members. Working groups have been established to following topics: general problems, environment, social life and health, economic-institutional, security and defence, education and culture, regional and local development. The working groups are editing basic documents trying to apply the interdisciplinary approach and to attract into their discussions other interested people (the young generation as well). The final goal is to prepare the Conference on the national level and to open the discussion in the civic society.

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