

2017

ANNUAL REPORT



FOREWORD

After 60 years, looking ahead to Europe's future

2017 was a very important year for Europe, as it marked the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community, forerunner of the European Union (EU). We have since enjoyed six decades of peace, prosperity and security, unprecedented in modern history. Even today, the EU is largely viewed as a cornerstone of European stability and prosperity. However, the EU is also facing a range of political and economic pressures, a multitude of internal and external challenges, from globalization to the impact of new technologies on society and jobs, to security concerns and the rise of populism. We must ensure that we are not overwhelmed but, rather, that we seize the opportunities that these trends present. We have the future of Europe, we have our future in our hands.

Eager to involve and empower its citizens the Commission launched the debate on the future of Europe and proposed discussions on several scenarios. The European People's Party (EPP) also participated in these discussions. The Malta document 'Europe secures our future' prepared for and adopted in the EPP Congress of 28-29 March 2017, exposes the many challenges for the near future. The first draft for this text was written by Herman Van Rompuy and Elmar Brok. After several discussions and contributions from parties and associations it grew into a comprehensive dossier of many pages. One of the mentioned challenges, namely demographic change, concerns older persons and the European Seniors' Union (ESU) in particular. This demographic change is affecting our societies in multi-functional and often in different ways. To respond to these challenges the EPP calls for a general European strategy. The increased life expectancy for both women and men, the richness of life experiences and knowledge of older persons present opportunities and challenges for each person and for policymaking. We appreciate that the EPP Congress highlighted the challenges and opportunities of demographic change and is ready to support the development of operational goals and political instruments and actions. We, as the ESU, will be glad to participate actively in this process.

More Years. Better chances. In our mission and our activities we permanently defend the right of older persons to live in dignity and enjoyment of all human rights. Member States and regional and local authorities therefore have to develop the necessary policy responses to the individual and societal needs of ageing populations and to secure the access of older persons to adequate social protection and well-functioning systems of health and long-term care. This policy perspective needs several corner stones: active ageing, intergenerational solidarity, growing involvement of civil society, ... The annual report we present to our member associations, colleagues and friends reflects what active citizenship and involvement in the future of European societies means. We hope to continue our engagement next year too. We owe this engagement to the unique peace and prosperity project and to the generations who fought for it. We are sure that future generations in innovative approaches and solidarity between generations will create new and hopeful perspectives.

Guido Dumon

An Hermans



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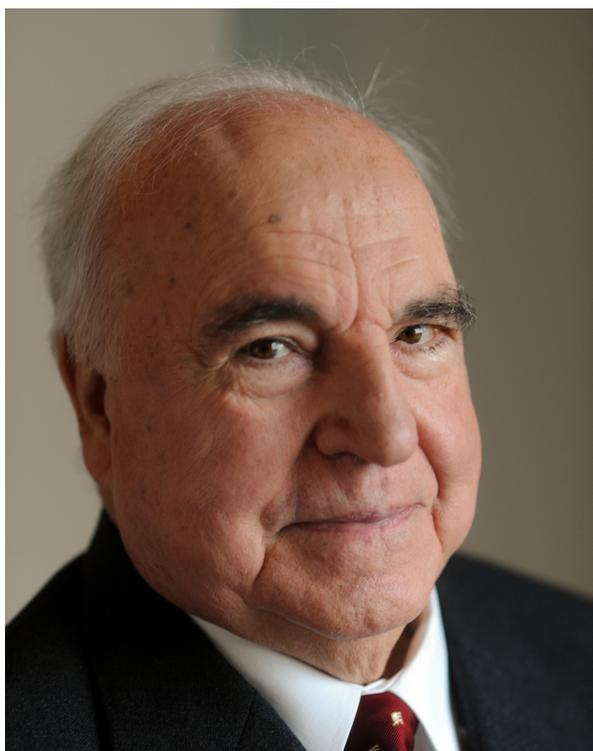
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1. In memoriam

A tribute to Helmut Kohl

We start our annual report paying tribute to Helmut Kohl (1930-2017). He died on the 16th of June 2017. Former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl will always be remembered as the architect of German reunification and a driving force for European integration. He was one of the greatest leaders in post-war Europe.

Dr. Bernhard Worms, Former Secretary of State and Former President of the ESU:



“ This summer, the European Seniors’ Union and the European citizens mourn the death of Helmut Kohl, “father” of many initiatives that had one single purpose: Making the way towards Europe irreversible. The political work of this great European personality only had two intentions: Concerning Germany, this meant following up the final reconciliation with France, the ‘hereditary enemy’, with Israel in atonement for genocide of the Jewish people, and with Poland, a nation that in history had always been prepared to sacrifice the lives of its people for the Christian occident, and that had always suffered from Germany.

His intentions concerning Europe were the completion of the work of important European personalities of the years after World War II, which meant the construction and development of a European Union that, thanks to Christian and Jewish values, would be able to contribute definitively to peace, liberty and the inviolable dignity of human mankind all over the world.

Open towards the important changes among the five generations of our civilisation, he founded the German Seniors’ Union in 1998 and entrusted me to do accordingly in the European Union. He wanted the essential life experience of the elder generation to be passed on to our grandchildren’. ”

Pol Marck

On 21 November 2017 Mr Pol Marck passed away at 86 years of age. Pol Marck served as a Belgian member of the European Parliament from 1981 to 1994. After his retirement he was for many years member of the ESU Executive Committee and ESU Vice president. President An Hermans sent her condolences to his wife and family.



2. The ESU bodies

2.1 The Congress

Our latest congress - the 9th congress of the ESU - took place in 2016 in Leuven. Every three years we organize a congress. The next will be in 2019.

2.2 The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is the strategic political body of the association and is composed as follows: the members of the presidency and two delegates per member association. The Executive Committee gathered on 8 February in Brussels and on 30 June in Vienna. In line with the statutes several organizational aspects were on the agenda. To inform and empower our associations conferences and discussions highlighted subjects related to European policy making (See further: Conferences).

In 2017 we were happy to welcome two new observer associations: the 'Union of Senior Generation' from Armenia and 'Vajdasagi Magyar Szövetség Nyugdíjas Forum' (Pensioner Forum of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians) from Serbia.

They applied for the status of "observer member". In future they could apply for the "full member" status if they fulfil the eligibility criteria.

The CDA-Senioren (NL) was observer until 2016 and is now accepted as full member.

(See the list of member associations on page ...).



2.3 The Presidium (or board)

According to the ESU statutes, the Presidium is composed of the president, (a maximum of) twelve Vice-Presidents, the Secretary General, the Treasurer and the honorary Presidents.

In the 2016 Congress were elected:

President
<i>Prof. Dr. Em. An Hermans</i>
Vice-Presidents
<i>Prof. Nikolay Andreev (BG)</i>
<i>MEP Heinz K. Becker (AT)</i>
<i>Antonios Demetriades (CY)</i>
<i>Elke Garczyk (DE)</i>
<i>Marjatta Nykänen (FI)</i>
<i>Janusz Marszalek (PL)</i>
<i>Lidmila Nemcova (CZ)</i>
<i>Gabriele Peus-Bispinck (DE)</i>
<i>Carmen Quintanilla Barba (ES)</i>
<i>Ann Räämet (EE)</i>
<i>Christine von Stefenelli-Gostner (IT/Südtirol)</i>
<i>Zvonko Zinrajh (SI)</i>

In November 2017 Marjatta Nykänen (FI) announced that she stepped down from her position. We thank her for her interest and involvement in our association. According to the ESU statutes and by decision of the Presidium Marjatta Nykänen will be succeeded by Roland Leek (SE).

The Presidium gathered in 2017 on 7 February to evaluate the financial management of the association, on 28 March to prepare the EPP Congress in Malta, on 29 June in Vienna discussing the implementation of the EPP Congress, on 13 October in Larnaca meeting Southern European problems and on 8-10 December preparing the 'kick off' of the European Election campaign.

2.4 The General Secretariat

The Secretariat General is located in the EPP headquarter (front office, rue de Commerce 10, Brussels). The Secretary General, through a close dialogue with the President, does the preparation, the management and the execution of the operational goals of the associations. He is supported by some volunteers, seniors as well as students.

2.5 Stay Informed

With the digital newsletter of the EPP, EPP Inside News, the ESU has, like other EPP members and member associations, the possibility to spread information within the party about its activities. This newsletter is issued on a monthly basis.

Social media is used to increase visibility and communications, not only with members, but also with people interested in the ESU.

Senior International

Updating our organization and its associations in "Senior International" is the task of Ulrich Winz. He gathers all the news from conferences and associations and presents a new edition of the newsletter almost every month. This year Mr. Winz has brought out the 150th edition of Senior International. President An Hermans thanked Mr. Winz for sharing his competence and engagement with us. She presented him with a pen in the name of the ESU at the Summer Academy in Vienna. We want to express our appreciation for the work and monthly effort of Mr. Winz.

Senior International is available through our mail and on our website.

Some digital instruments:



Website:
www.esu-epp.eu



Facebook
www.facebook.com/esu.eu/



Flickr account:
www.flickr.com/photos/137596848@No6/



Twitter account:
www.twitter.com/esu_epp



Internal communication to the ESU Presidency is conducted in English. Communication with the Executive Committee is done in several languages. Most frequently we use: English, German and French.

3. ESU Conferences

3.1 Regional conference in Prague

On 11-12 March 2017, the ESU and its Czech member organisation (SKS CR) organized a regional conference in Prague about the 'Quality of Life' of seniors. Speakers and participants from several European countries presented research results and policy initiatives. Mrs. Lidmila Nemcova introduced experienced speakers presenting good practices. One of the central notions to enhance the quality of life as people age is 'active ageing'. It relates to many areas of older people's lives, and it requires a comprehensive focus on policy making. The Active Ageing Index (AAI) allows comparison of active ageing levels between different European countries. The results can help to identify strengths and weaknesses in a country. President An Hermans underlined the importance of the awareness of the results of the Active Ageing Index (AAI) at national and regional level. It is an instrument to help monitor active ageing and to promote the active participation of seniors in economic and social life. Underlining the importance of a basic attitude appreciating and promoting the potential of seniors An Hermans stated:

“ *Feeling respected, being part of society are important dimensions of wellbeing and quality of life for all generations.* ”



3.2 ESU-APAN Conference Malta

On 29 March 2017 members of the Assoċjazzjoni Penjonanti Anzjani Nazzjonalisti (APAN) and the European Seniors' Union (ESU) held a conference in Malta. The President of APAN, Dr. Mario Rizzo Naudi M.D. and ESU President An Hermans welcomed participants from all over Europe and the three key speakers: Herman Van Rompuy (former President of the EU

Council), Roberta Metsola (Member of the European Parliament) and Dr. Louis Galea (former Minister and former Member of the European Court of Auditors). Prof. Steven Van Hecke, moderated the discussion.



Mr. Van Rompuy stated that in view of the recent EU achievements, the widespread pessimism about EU functioning is disproportional. According to the statistics, economic growth is on-going (1.7%), 5 million jobs were created in the Eurozone since 2014, immigration is limited and the democratic level is increasing. We therefore have reason to feel proud. Unfortunately the different directions of growing nationalism have caused weakening in our Western world, although Mr. Van Rompuy does not see any return of a Cold War scenario. He emphasises that the EU is "not only about economics but also about identity and security". In his view, the main reason for populism is inequality in our EU.

The challenges for the EU are: growing worldwide competition and lack of innovation, higher savings than investment, a growing ageing population, the digital revolution and the impact of climate change. The EU needs more quality education, higher professionalism and more cross-border cooperation. Standing still is therefore not an option, instead we have to deepen and strengthen the EU. France and Germany have to take the lead, Mr. Van Rompuy stated. Further, the EU has to strengthen the military power and reduce greenhouse gas pollution. Although "we know the menu and the recipes" there is a lack of political will. We need a Union of results, and that is a joint effort.

"The future of Europe is not about its institutes, but about the promises of Europe concerning peace, prosperity, and integration. What unites us must win over what divides us."

According to Roberta Metsola, the EU should be closer to its people. EU citizens struggle with questions concerning the legitimacy of the EU. The future of Europe is not about its institutes, but about the promises of Europe concerning peace, prosperity and integration. What unites us must win over what divides us. Europe means high standards and thus protection for weaker Member States. So, Europe must reform; get closer to the citizens that we represent. Europe must be the voice of moderation. It must take decisions in favour of our people. Europe must secure our future. Security, social justice and employment are important for our people. The EPP must keep on leading the way. We have the responsibility to make Europe stronger and safer. We need strong national borders to maintain Schengen. We need to shift our thinking and create a long-term vision concerning migration and refugees. Proper care and better management are essential. The responsibility should be shared. The EU project should not be taken for granted. Not everyone is eligible for protection. People's dignity should be respected while immigrants have to respect our values. The EU should consider a 'Marshall Plan'; the EU has to remain big on one side, but small on the other. It has to work for its citizens and see what lives within them. Corruption has to be combated and the rule of law must prevail.

Dr. Louis Galea, pointed out three priorities for the EU which have to be secured:

1. To engage with people
2. To be more effective in the delivery of outcomes
3. To improve genuine collaboration on all levels

He quoted Monnet:

“ *People of the past cannot solve the problems of today.* ”

He emphasized that collaboration needs spirit and goodwill coming from a connection between people and politicians.

Several participants presented their comments and Prof. Steven Van Hecke made an inventory of questions and critics. In the ensuing discussion speakers and participants highlighted today's challenges in European societies.

Mr. Charlot Cassar, Fr. Joseph Inguanez, Etienne Borg Cardona, Lawrence Grech, Robert Cutajar, Mark Anthony Summut, MEP Therese Comodini Cachia and MP Claudette Buttigieg entered the discussion, chairing facts of their own experiences and underlined that no country can solve the problems of today by themselves. We need to work together in a European context. Speakers mentioned the challenges of demographic change, the growing gap between poor and rich and

the necessity of employment for young people. But above all, we need to restore confidence in the European project, a project based on freedom and democracy, the rule of law and justice.

Participants from other countries expressed their satisfaction of having the opportunity of sharing experiences. MEP Heinz K. Becker, Leif Hallberg, Marilies Flemming, Gabriele Peus-Bispinck, Lidmila Nemcova and Andreas Mikolov expressed their concerns about growing nationalism, the urgent migration problems, the European relation with Turkey, the fight against terror, the future of Europe after Brexit, ...

Despite all the problems and challenges mentioned, one feeling prevailed: our young and old generation can be proud of what the EU has achieved, still, we cannot take the future for granted. Let us believe in Europe and quicken the 'pulse of Europe'.

Dr. Mario Rizzo Naudi, President APAN:



“ *We need to care about the future of Europe, about the well-being of present and future generations, to continue with determination to uphold the values of living in peace and prosperity. We urge the EPP to do everything possible, effectively and with transparency in its European policy so that EU citizens will look up to the EU with trust and thus strengthen its cohesion among Member States.* ”

Herman Van Rompuy, former President EU Council at the APAN-ESU conference on 29 March:



“ The Union is again at a crossroads.

Last Saturday in Rome (Celebration 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome) it was said that the Union will be united or will not be.

I add:

The Union will be deepened and strengthened or will not be.

The Union will be defended and promoted by its leaders or will not be.

The Union will be open and more protecting or will not be.

In any case, we need a 'Union of results' in all those domains relevant for the support of citizens for the EU. We shouldn't forget that regaining trust in the Union and in national politics is the same fight.”

Dr. Luis Galea:



“ Many today are recalling the words of one of the European founders, Jean Monnet: "The sovereign nations of the past can no longer solve the problems of the present: they cannot ensure their own progress or control their own future. And the Community itself is only a stage on the way to the organized world of tomorrow." This is as true now as it was true then. It was as difficult then as it is today. But then they achieved it with magnificent and historical results. His prescription was - collaboration.”

Roberta Metsola, MEP:



“ Friends, the future of Europe is not only about the shape of our institutions and our agencies. It is about the promise of Europe. It is about the promise that peace, unity and prosperity will continue to be aims of the future irrespective of the shape or size of our Union. Because the promise of Europe is about our shared values; about our common heritage and about the coming together of peoples and nations. It is the understanding that what unites us will always triumph over what divides us. That the common good will always take precedence over individualistic, short-term gain.

That is the promise of Europe that has made us the envy of the world and the beacon of hope for people all over the globe. And that is what the EPP represents.”

3.3 Vienna - Summer Academy



On 30 June – 3 July, the European Seniors' Union organized, with the help of the Wilfried Martens Centre and the Politische Akademie der ÖVP, its Summer Academy around 'Europe's future'. The Politische Akademie der ÖVP (Polak) hosted the 9th ESU Summer Academy, including 75 delegates of Seniors' Associations across Europe. As contemporaries of the late German statesman Helmut Kohl (1930-2017), these delegates are convinced about 'Europe is our Future'. They remain wholeheartedly committed to the European project and call for strong European leadership - not for reverting to nationalism.

Ingred Korosec, President of the Österreichischer Seniorenbund (ÖSB) and Member of the Vienna Regional Parliament, opened the Summer Academy at the Politische Akademie in Vienna. A welcome note was brought by Former Federal Minister of Defense, Head of the Academic Council of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies and Honorary President of the Political Academy of the Austrian People's Party, Werner Fasslabend.

ESU President, An Hermans, mentioned in her opening speech, that in the last years, the European Union, the Member States and the whole society were confronted with unforeseen problems and challenges. But, as some European leaders said, "Every crisis can turn into an opportunity." She also pointed out: "We believe in the future of Europe" and stressed the importance of continuing to work for it.

Lively discussions followed. The audience could ask questions to:

Heinz Becker: MEP - Vice-President of the ESU - Secretary General of ÖSB about 'European Affairs and Seniors';

Vit Novotny: Senior Researcher at Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies about 'Demographic Changes and Migration in Europe';

Mr. Sekardi: co-worker of Finance and HR at the Federation of Austrian Industries about 'The importance of the EU for Industry'



On Saturday 1 July we heard some interesting presentations and speeches. ESU Secretary General Guido Dumon introduced the national reports and Prof. Steven Van Hecke held a presentation on 'The social dimension of the European Union'.

We are very grateful to the Österreichischer Seniorenbund and, in particular, to former Minister Dr. Marilies Flemming, who has taken the initiative now for the 9th time to organize the Summer Academy. It is a unique platform for training and empowering senior citizens. They are returning home every time for a new year of engagement in civil society, a new year of sharing with their fellow citizens their new hope and belief in Europe.



3.4 Regional Conference in Munich

On 28-30 September 2017, the ESU and the CSU-Seniorenunion organized a regional conference in Munich on 'Security and Trust - the Future of the EU'.

On the first day, the participants of the conference were welcomed by ESU Vice-President Elle Garczyk.

ESU President An Hermans then delivered a speech in which she reaffirmed "serving fellow citizens" as a priority task for all political and social action. The ESU and its affiliates are specifically involved in this, according to An Hermans.

Dr. Thomas Goppel, Chairman of the CSU Seniors and former Minister of State, explained in his speech that he sees Europe as a "leader" in the human rights debate. For Markus Blume, member of the Bavarian State Parliament and Deputy Secretary-General of the CSU, the "three fundamental roots" of open Europe, liberal democracy and social market economy are to be defended against external attacks. Further, Prof. Dr. Ursula Münch, Director of the Academy for Political Education in Tutzing, saw the EU's capacity to act in the face of global challenges as primarily critical. Prelate Dr. Lorenz Wolf, head of the Catholic Office in Bavaria, noted that change is taking place faster than ever before. Examples include storage of knowledge, the revolution in communication and social processes. During the second day of the Conference, Bernd Poselt, President of the Pan-European Union of Germany, emphasized that "Europeans are more united than divided". Minister of State Joachim Herrmann spoke as one of the initiators of the CSU Seniors' Union. "The right to security is one of the most important of the state", he declared, and this "monopoly of force" was consistently implemented in Bavaria. For MEP Heinz K. Becker, ESU Vice-President and Secretary-General of the Austrian Seniors' Association, "it is clear that in Germany the fearful citizens have decided the election campaign". Their concerns are to be taken seriously, at the same time rejecting their lies and half-truths.

On the final day of the conference, MEP Markus Ferber, Chairman of the South Swabia CSU and Regional Chairman of the Europa-Union Bavaria, applied himself to dealing with personal data and border protection. In Germany, "we will not make progress with our internal security with our federalism," he said. He sees deficits in the fact that data does not have the required quality, is stored in the wrong place or is not retrieved. Elke Garczyk, who is also a Member of the Board of the CSU Seniors, concluded that the contributions to the speeches and discussions did justice to the large information requirements of the population across all age groups. She underlined the role that civil society associations can play in restoring trust in daily politics.

3.4 Regional Conference in Nicosia

On 14 October the Senior Citizens Organization of Cyprus and the ESU organized a South Regional Conference around 'Technology & Active Ageing'. It took place at the University of Cyprus, Nicosia. The meeting was organized by Antonios C. Demetriades, President of the Seniors' Association in Cyprus.

A welcoming speech was given by University Rector Mr. Costas Christophides and a recorded message from the President of the Republic and High Patron Mr. Nicos Anastasiades was aired. He thanked the voluntary active seniors of Cyprus and the ESU for their indispensable political commitment and emphasized how urgent the matter of "state unity" is for him. The President of the Republic of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiadis, is the founder of the Senior Citizens' Organisation of Cyprus (SCOC). In 2015, he received the title of High Patron of the association. On the occasion of the Regional Conference on 17-19 October 2017, organised by Antonios Demetriades, he invited the ESU Presidium to the Presidential Palace.

During the conference there were also speeches from Antonios Demetriades, Aferof Neophytou (President of the Democratic Rally), Ionas Nicolaou (Minister of Justice) and Mrs. Maria Kanellopoulou (representative of the Greek Seniors).

The Minister of Labour Welfare and Social Insurance, Mrs. Zeta Emilianides, emphasized the opportunities of modern technologies for direct access to information, which could be of particular benefit to solitary, elderly and care-dependent persons.

The main speech was the given by Dr. Marios Kyriazis, Biomedical-Gerontologist, followed by speeches from Marina Polycarpou, (Gerontology/Psychology, M.S.) and Elisavet Kourti from the University of Cyprus). She said that video games are a microcosm and full of problems. The players are asked to "meet challenges, find solutions, develop skills and understanding through complex activity. The video players of the future will be seniors, who today still often see the games of young people as a waste of time," the scientist concluded.

President Hermans also explained that when highlighting 'technology and active ageing' during the conference, "we create a meeting point, a crossroads between the challenges of demographic change and the opportunities of changing technologies. This changing technology is affecting our method of policy making but also our economy, our workplace, our healthcare and our daily lifestyle. For the growing proportion of older population, who are healthy and active but not in the work field, new fields of needs and opportunities can be explored. Developing technologies are only one of the key drivers of what is called the 'Silver Economy'". She expressed her hope that the Conference would be "an eye-opener and an invitation to build multiple innovative bridges between both the challenges in the fields of active ageing and the infinite technological capabilities that today offers. I am sure that if we find a way to bridge these two components, then we are on our way to 'more years and better lives' for today's generation and the future generations in the EU and worldwide."

4. Representation of the ESU

4.1 Participation in the EPP

4.1.1 EPP - Congress in Malta



On 29-30 March, the European People's Party (EPP) held its 24th EPP Congress in Malta. Mr. Simon Busutill welcomed the 2500 guests and delegates and expressed his concerns about the many challenges our societies have to cope with. He mentioned in particular: immigration and security concerns due to terrorism and corruption. 'An institution should be for people and not for itself' he said 'we have to build the EU for tomorrow'.

The EPP's EU heads of state and government, opposition leaders, leaders of the EU institutions - European Council President Donald Tusk, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, European Parliament President Antonio Tajani and EPP Group Chairman Manfred Weber - and EPP leaders addressed the audience.

The Congress outlined the EPP's vision for "Secure Europe's Future".

See: <http://malta2017.epp.eu/documentation/>

EPP Congress in Malta: <http://www.epp.eu/>

EPP President Joseph Daul made the following statement: "To bring results to the European people we need to preserve European unity and move forward together. We can move at different speeds; but we all need to look in the same direction, without leaving anyone behind.

We are providing solutions for how to make our Union more secure. We have put forward bold proposals to make our Union more prosperous, more sustainable and fairer. We have set the path for our Union to be an inspiring leader, both regionally and globally. But above all, we want a Europe close to its citizens, a Europe that acts where it can make a difference. This is the biggest political challenge ahead of us, and we are determined to reconnect with European citizens."

This congress was very important to the ESU as a contribution to other events, such as the ESU-APAN Congress and the preparations for the Summer Academy in Vienna. The following paragraph was used from the congress document to discuss during the Summer Academy:

"The European Union is facing unprecedented demographic changes (an ageing population, low birth rates, changing family structures and migration). In the light of these challenges, it is important, both at EU and at national level, to review and adapt existing policies. We recognize that strong families are a precondition for positive demographic developments, and we advocate pro-family values and policies. We need a more creative and coordinated response from the EU and its Member States, and we call for a European strategy on demographic change and for more family- and child-friendly environments. This strategy should aim to integrate the economic, social and scientific challenges and increase the potential of the working-age population. It should also stimulate active and healthy ageing and create new opportunities for intergenerational solidarity. Moreover, it should take into account the major disparities between and within Member States, both in terms of life expectancy as well as in living and working conditions."

See: EPP vision text adopted in the Malta Congress: Secure Europe's Future: <http://malta2017.epp.eu/documentation/>

4.2.2 EPP- Political Assembly



The EPP Political Assembly regularly draws together delegates from parties and associations from all over Europe. On the agenda: reports and discussions about the political situation in Europe and roadmaps for the near future (migration, security, common agricultural policy). President An Hermans and Secretary General Guido Dumon attend the meetings as delegates from the European Seniors' Union. They represent and highlight the active role of seniors in civil societies and call for full involvement of seniors, also in politics.

4.2.3 EPP - Working Groups

4.2.3.1 EPP Working Group 1

Co-chaired by EPP President Joseph Daul and EPP Vice-President and MEP David McAllister, Working Group 1 'European Policy' has the task of preparing the EPP's most vital policy papers and Congress documents on European issues. In 2017 it prepared the congress document 'Secure Europe's Future' for the EPP Congress in Malta. Dr. Marilies Flemming and An Hermans represent the ESU in this working group.

4.2.3.2 EPP Working Group 2

Working Group 2 'Economic and Social Policy', co-chaired by Irish Minister for European Affairs and Data Protection, EPP Vice-President Dara Murphy and EPP Vice-President Corien Wortmann-Kool, is focused on responding to the current economic and financial crisis, the Lisbon process, demographic issues, and research and development. ESU Vice-President Heinz K. Becker, MEP, represents the ESU in this Working Group.

4.2.3.3 EPP Working Group

Chaired by EPP Vice-President and MEP Paulo Rangel, Working Group 3 'Membership' is mandated to promote, facilitate and incorporate new EPP members, associate members and observers throughout the continent. When a party is accepted in the EPP, its elected representatives automatically join the EPP Group in the European Parliament and all other EPP Groups and organisations. ESU Vice President Nikolay Andreev (BG) represents the ESU in this Working Group.

5. Other events and representations of ESU in cooperation with other stake-holders

5.1 Konrad Adenauer Forum



On 7-8 February, the European Seniors' Union held its Presidium meeting and Executive Committee in Brussels. The delegates enjoyed the speeches of MEP Heinz Becker on social policy and of the Belgian Minister of State Mark Eyskens presenting his reflections on today's ever-changing world.

In the evening of 8 February delegates enjoyed the Dinner Debate jointly organized by the European Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) and the ESU. Mr. José Maria Gil-Robles, former President of the European Parliament, gave a convincing speech in favour of the Social Market Economy and outlined the current problems in a broad historical context. "Also today we will overcome the difficulties and together in the EPP we play a decisive role in Europe", said MEP Antonio Lopez, General Secretary of the EPP.

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is a political foundation. In Germany, 16 regional offices and two conference centres offer a wide variety of civic education conferences and events. At home and abroad, their civic education programs aim to promote freedom and liberty, peace and justice. Their focus is on consolidating democracy, the unification of Europe and the strengthening of transatlantic relations, as well as on development cooperation.

5.2 Intergenerational Dialogue Seminar Budapest

"Our European societies have numerous problems to overcome: demographic change is only one of them, but it must be possible to address it" stated ESU President An Hermans in Budapest on the eve of the 9th European Day of Generational Solidarity (29 April).



"You have stolen our future ..." This slogan expresses the feeling of young people immediately after the publication of the results of the BREXIT referendum. It is often used to mark the disappointment of young people with the heritage older generations transfer to future generations in the field of social protection and the lack of care they have given to ecology. Reasons enough for the ESU and the Robert Schuman Institute (RSI) to organize a seminar (Budapest, 24-25 April 2017) focused on this relation between generations and promoting political responsibility of youth and seniors.

For almost 30 years international and European frameworks have insisted on the importance of intergenerational solidarity. It is understood as social cohesion between generations, as an inclusive society for all ages. It is a pillar of fair and sustainable societies, informal and formal welfare - and it is an integral part of the European social model. President of the ESU An Hermans pointed out that: "Demographic change due to the increase of life expectancy and low birth rates has affected our societies and lifestyle. All governments, from local to international level, have to contend with the challenges and opportunities of 'ageing societies'." "In many countries, democracies are under pressure. We see the same in Europe. Lack of interest, mistrust, populism, changing attitudes towards political parties, poor political education, new styles of communication, ... we must think about solutions to overcome these challenges."

As a result of the seminar the participants of the European Seniors' Union call on the members of the European People's Party (EPP) to intensify their actions to enable practical and mutual beneficial and satisfying intergenerational relations. They remind the members of the EPP of the EPP vision text adopted in Malta (29 March 2017), stating the need for a general European strategy on demographic change including the creation of new opportunities for intergenerational solidarity in different areas of policy.

The Robert Schuman Institute (RSI) is the European educational centre for politicians and parties belonging to the political family of the European People's Party (EPP). Since 1991 the RSI has been promoting the idea of a united Europe and the basic values of the EPP / Christian Democracy, supporting the process of democratic transformation, the development of civil societies and of the EPP affiliated parties through education and training.

5.3 IDEA-Engagement for democracy: the Inter-Generational dialogue

The Office of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance to the European Union (International IDEA) invited the European Seniors' Union to take part in "Engagement for democracy: the Inter-Generational Dialogue" at European Development Days 2017 (EDD 2017). We participated in a stand activity on 8 June. It was a pleasure to work together with Andrew Bradley and Marilyn Neven and to meet the dynamic IDEA team. The exchange on young people's active citizenship and political engagement was especially interesting.



International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) Its mission is to support sustainable democratic change through providing comparative knowledge, assisting in democratic reform, and influencing policies and politics. Membership in International IDEA is open to governments

that demonstrate, by example in their own state, their commitment to the rule of law, human rights, the basic principles of democratic pluralism and strengthening democracy.

5.4 Friends of the ESU

Members of the EPP group in the European Parliament are invited to participate in meetings of the 'Friends of the ESU'. This group met for the first time in autumn 2014 on the initiative of ESU President An Hermans and ESU Vice-President Heinz K. Becker (MEP). The aim is to promote the concerns of seniors in European politics. Friends of the ESU are taking to heart the notions of active and resilient citizenship, age-friendly EU policies and dialogue with seniors' associations in their home countries.

ESU members are invited to create awareness of the importance of good mutual relations between senior citizens and politicians.

5.5 Representation in AGE

ESU enjoys since several years an important and stimulating cooperation with AGE Platform Europe, a European network of non-profit organisations of and for 190 million citizens aged 50+.

AGE works mainly on older people's rights, socio-economic policies and age-friendly environments. AGE activities involve opinion-building campaigns, involvement in older people-focused EU projects and selection of good practices for the day-to-day application of core senior citizens policies.

AGE General Assembly 2017, with the active participation of ESU representatives, stated i.a. that older people and their organisations need to stand together to combat the pervasive ageism and age discrimination that persist in our societies to enhance social justice between generations.

"Time has come for more political will and social activism to protect older persons' rights", AGE General Assembly concluded.

During the 3-day General assembly AGE members and external participants commonly acknowledged that, while historically neglected, older persons should be empowered to enjoy the same level of legal protection as any other population or age groups and their rights should be realised and enforced in the EU as well as world-wide.

ESU is currently represented in AGE by ESU Honorary Presidents Leif Hallberg and Elisabeth Dispaux-Cornil.

5.6 Meetings with seniors' associations

President An Hermans and Secretary General Guido Dumon participated on 11-12 February in the "Senior Høyres Landsmøte 2017" in Fredrikstad (Norway). The Norwegian policy on demographic change 'More years, better lives' was presented and a political programme in view of the elections adopted. Mr. Sverre Mauritzen is re-elected as President of the seniors' association. About 100 delegates from all the Norwegian counties participated actively in the debates. They enjoyed active involvement in the political debates and stand for their active participation in all fields of society. For the ESU An Hermans expressed her appreciation for the active role that the association and, in particular, Sverre Mauritsen plays in the ESU. 'Norway is not a member of the EU, but in the ESU we share the same values' An Hermans said in a panel debate with Ingierd Schou, Norwegian member of the Parliament of the Council of Europe.

5.7 International Day of Older Persons

The United Nations celebrates the International Day of Older Persons on 1 October each year to appreciate the contributions that older persons make to society, such as voluntary work, caring for other family members and friends, working in paid employment, creating paid employment for others and acting as public representatives.

The day also helps to raise awareness about issues commonly affecting older persons, such as widespread elder abuse and problems accessing and receiving high-quality long-term care. The International Day of Older Persons provides an opportunity to reflect on the current state of play in the human rights protection of older persons.

From the message of President An Hermans on 1 October 2017:

"European seniors know how important the EU was and is for the construction of peace, freedom and security. From a United Europe they expected prosperity and wellbeing for themselves and for future generations. Also today, seniors expect that the EU will respond to new challenges. Two of these challenges are demographic change and the development of inclusive societies. The European Seniors' Union (ESU) is convinced that responding to the challenges of ageing societies, drawing attention to the human rights' situation of older people in our own country and worldwide, is not only the responsibility of governments, but also of citizens and must take place at local, regional and international levels. It is essential that older persons themselves have a central role. That is why we feel committed to the issue."

On the occasion of the International Day of Older Persons,

- We call for the promotion of more positive images of older persons, underlining their universal human rights and the contributions and strengths of older people for our societies, fighting ageism and discrimination, especially in workplaces and in health services.

- We insist on the permanent implementation of a human rights approach as the underlying framework for the development of age-friendly policies, active ageing initiatives and special services related to the specific needs of older persons.

- We urge the EU, Member States and regions to develop strategies to cope with the challenges of demographic change and the potentials of living longer (healthy ageing, extended working lives, Silver Economy, the voluntary sector, ...), stimulating intergenerational solidarity and providing the necessary conditions for adequate social protection and wellbeing.

- We invite the EU and the Member States to engage actively in international initiatives on ageing policies

and the protection of older persons' rights (such as the UN Open-Ended Working Group, OEWG) to develop legal instruments and action plans to protect and enhance the role of older persons all over the world.

Let us celebrate our engagement in the global movement for the promotion of older persons' rights. Let us build sustainable societies for all, where the potential of living longer can be fully realized and everyone can grow up and age in dignity.

5.8 How Europe works. Meeting young politicians from the Eastern European Partnership

On 9 November the ESU was invited to meet a group of young politicians involved in the development of political parties in Moldova, Georgia, Belarus, the Ukraine They were participating in a 4-day study-visit in European institutions. Meeting with representatives of the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the Council, political parties and think tanks they received first-hand information. But the Robert Schuman Institute also offers these young politicians the opportunity to learn how our EPP works and the possible role of civil society. Already several times An Hermans was invited to speak about seniors' associations and ... the importance of giving older persons a voice in society. Most young persons in Eastern European countries feel a great difference between the experiences of their parents and grandparents and their own aspirations. An Hermans contends that it is worth trying to bridge the gap between generations. And ... we are happy to see that young professionals are ready to take up the challenge of intergenerational dialogue and to start from a human rights approach, also for older persons.

6. Looking Ahead

The European Parliament is now more than halfway through its mandate and a survey was therefore launched to examine the opinion of European citizens 2 years before the elections (May/June 2019). The goal was to gain a better understanding of the behavior of Europeans on what is happening in our world. The survey measured perceptions and expectations in relation to EU action. This data is based on a survey by the Euro Barometer. Below you can find a summary of the key findings of the study, remember these results should always be approached critically.

Key Findings

EU citizens are more than ever aware that there is a lot shifting in geopolitical thinking, considering the American Presidency, the influence of Russia and China, but also the BREXIT and growing instability throughout the Muslim world. They consequently favour an overall European approach. In comparison to the survey of 2016, EU citizens today believe it is more appropriate for the EU to take action in 15 selected areas. Can we conclude from this that there is a raising awareness of citizens about EU input?

There is a positive trend of support for EU membership, 57% of respondents consider it as a positive fact that their country is a EU Member State. This positive vibe is almost equivalent to the level of support before the economic crisis of 2008. In 23 Member States the relationship between citizens and the EU has increased compared with one year ago. Nevertheless, only a minority of respondents feels that their voice counts within EU policy.

The speed of integration appears to be an issue, should it be done with only some Member States or all together? Although there is much disagreement in this regard, there is still an 8% increase for the camp that claims that the EU must act without waiting for the other Member States. There is also a slight increase as regards interest in EU policy among citizens.

The EU's democratic deficit is still present, the EU does not convince the majority of the citizens of its democratic way of working, 47% dissatisfied, 42% satisfied. Opposite these positive developments it appears that many Europeans share concerns about inequality between social groups in the EU. For example, the majority of respondents say that the crisis will continue for a long time. Also, 50% of respondents say that the future of the EU does not look promising.

In general, the '55+ respondents' agree with the other age groups, although it can be seen that they are most critical in answering the questions on the EU and its influence.

Source:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2017/2019ee/two_years_until_ee2019_synthesis_en.pdf

The survey is supplemented by a socio-demographic focus:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2017/2019ee/two_years_until_ee2019_sociodemofocus_en.pdf

Much work remains to be done

As a closing thought of this annual report we would like to refer to President Joseph Daul's message on 15 November supporting the European Social Summit in Göteborg. On the eve of the adoption (17 November 2017) of the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, he said: 'Over the last 70 years Europe has become leader in setting social standards. Europe has the highest levels of social protection in the world. But also when Europe is a champion in providing well-being, human development and quality of life ... many people don't feel that they are benefitting from these high standards of social protection; they feel deprived of opportunities, ... We must therefore respond to the challenges that our citizens are facing'.

Yes, much work remains to be done in several fields of society. With the EPP, the ESU will continue to defend a citizens-centered Europe, a safe place where people feel at home, where it is good to live, work and grow old. The social market economy is at the heart of what the European People's Party stands for. Already for many decades, but also for today and tomorrow we need to respond to new challenges. Demographic change may be only one of them, but it is worth responding together to the strengths, limits and opportunities this change may offer to our societies. It is not enough to stand behind principles and social rights. These rights need to become a reality on the ground, whatever challenges arise. Then European citizens will feel that, in Europe, we put people first



The European Seniors' Union - ESU is a network of political seniors' associations in Europe. The ESU is a member association of the European People's Party (EPP) and is represented in 27 countries with 34 organizations. It is led by a Board, which is elected every three years. Since 2013 An Hermans is elected President of the association. The Secretary General of the association is Guido Dumon.

We believe in people of all generations to lead Europe to future developments.

We want our economies to return to growth that produces jobs, with young people looking to their future with confidence, seniors feeling proud of their accomplishments and families protected and strengthened to face the challenges and risks of changing societies. One of the key challenges of today's societies is demographic change. The EU, the Member States and all citizens, together we are called to cope with the gains, strengths and limitations of ageing societies. We, senior citizens, want to be part of a better Europe for all ages.

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Member Associations

AUSTRIA

Österreichischer Seniorenbund

BELGIUM

CD&V-senioren

Les Aînés du cdH

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Seniors of GERB

CROATIA

Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica

CYPRUS

Senior Citizens Organisation of Cyprus

CZECH REPUBLIC

Sdružení křesťanských seniorů

ESTONIA

Seniors' Association of pro Patria and Res Publica

FINLAND

Kansallinen Senioriliitto ry

GERMANY

Senioren-Union der CDU Deutschlands

Senioren-Union der CSU

GREECE

Seniors of Nea Demokratia

HUNGARY

Fidesz Hungarian Civic Union, Senior Department

Országos Nyugdíjas Polgári Egyesület

ITALY

SVP-Seniorenbewegung

LITHUANIA

HU-LCD Senior Citizens Club

LUXEMBOURG

CSV-Senioren

MALTA

Assoċjazzjoni Penjonanti Anzjani Nazzjonalisti

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SLOVENIA

Klub seniorjev in seniork pri SDS

Zveza seniorjev Nova Slovenija

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Observer Associations

ARMENIA

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BELARUS

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UKRAINE

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