



**Opening address of Prof. An Hermans, president of ESU,
9th Summer Academy in Vienna
6 July 2018**

Dear guests,

Dear colleagues and friends,

At the start of this Summer Academy, I would like to highlight three events that concerned me the last few days during the preparation of this event.

1. In the first place, I – or better we, it means everyone who was preparing this event-missed someone. Someone who has been a 'fixed value' in all past years, Mrs Marilies Flemming, and who will be so in the future but who we will have to miss this year: Marilies: former minister of Austria, fiery defender of Europe, champion for the ESU. I remember that about 10 years ago the idea was raised of "a" SA, One year? Every Two years? No one knew it at the start. But under Marilies' impulse the SA grew into the initiative we now know. I have written to her that she will be permanently in our minds. And ... I know nothing is less true. We are already looking forward to starting again for the 10th SA soon. But in the meantime we miss her.

2. A second point that kept me busy was the memory of Simone Veil (13 July 1927 – Paris, 30 June 2017). On Sunday, 1 July, she and her husband Antoine, were given the rare honor of a burial at the Panthéon in Paris, the resting place of France's greats. Simone Veil was one of the few survivors of the concentration camps of the Second World War (Auschwitz-Birkenau). Against the crimes that were done to her, she did not place hatred and retribution, but a call for cooperation to achieve peace and freedom. Her whole life symbolizes that deep human desire. After the first direct elections of the EP in 1979 she was elected president of the EP: a great lady, a politician who went her own way, a champion for human rights and especially women's rights, a mother and grandmother about whom her children and grandchildren were proud and testified with great tenderness. Simone Veil said it were her experiences in the Nazi concentration camps that made her a firm believer in the unification of Europe. Preparing our meeting here in Vienna, I thought of the life of Simone Veil and so many others of her generation,... hoped that their fight for freedom and peace would not be forgotten. The fact that we have built Europe must not be taken for granted but inspire our today's generations.

3. The third event that constantly asked my attention and worried me a lot were the marathon EU Summit talks on 30 June-1 July in Brussels. The through-the-night talks laid bare

- the dramatic need for a solution, a common solution for the migration crisis and... the inability to reach a coherent response to it;
- the long-festering tensions between the EU's 28 members and the disparities and contradictions between countries;
- the influence of ideological and populist interpretations of the refugee and migration crisis and national leaders' adaptations of solutions for their own use at home;
- the details about how EU will deal with the problem and who will take what share of refugees, are scant. The issue of migration is, perhaps, Europe's most challenging issue that needs a coherent solution.

In the coming days this issue will certainly be part of our discussions. Together with other challenges (security, economic growth, opportunities and limits of ageing generations...) we will certainly relate these challenges with the EU's founding ambition and the magnificent common architecture that has been erected after the devastation of 20th-century war, built up through stages, thanks to the vision of a handful of great political leaders.

From 1950, the road to the EU was built one step at a time. Each time this process of European unification has stalled, the need for better governance has become clearer. But today the way forward is hindered by the twin tigers of nationalism and populism, and citizens looking to Europe to fulfil the needs not met by their governments (security, jobs and welfare) have become frustrated.

In this context of distress over Europe, the European elections and the election campaign will take place. Shall we succeed in paying the needs of citizens - in jobs and social policies-sufficient attention? Let's start from the Treaty of Lisbon, art 3, and the goals relating to the wellbeing of citizens, social progress and economic growth and find out how Europe secures, empowers and protects its citizens. As well as what seniors expect from Europe and.... how we are involved in the European project.

We invited several high level speakers. I thank them very much for being with us here in Vienna and sharing their knowledge and competences. Most of all I would like to thank YOU all for being with us here in Vienna but also for preparing this Summer Academy. It was a real pleasure to read the stories about your work and engagement. Your voluntary engagements for a better Europe is really impressive

I wish you all a fruitful and joyful Summer Academy.

An Hermans