

<b>Speech Plenary 2018 Helsinki Congress (07.11.2018)</b>
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Dear Mister President,  
Dear Mister Secretary-General,  
Dear delegates and colleagues,  
Dear friends,

The European Union stands at a crossroads, facing a multitude of challenges. Demographic change, due to the increase of life expectancy and low birth rates, is only one of the changes that has affected our societies. At all government levels we are confronted with complex challenges regarding intergenerational solidarity, age-friendliness and active citizenship for seniors. This morning, for instance, we had interesting discussions on how to overcome the digital divide and how to create sustainable social protection systems for the future.

We, the European Seniors' Union as the main advocator for seniors' rights within the EPP, call upon all decision-makers in the EU, member states and regions for an innovative, coordinated and integrated response in policies such as employment, health and innovation. A truthful strategy for an age-friendly society includes decisive actions regarding social inclusion and participation of older adults in civil society. Ambitious plans in the field of person-centered health and long-term care are equally essential. Positive steps towards an inclusive labour market with a growing silver economy and a decent income for all older adults also contribute to the aim of a society for all ages.



Therefore it is important to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights as a leading principle of a Union based on values such as dignity and solidarity.

We, seniors, repeat that we still believe that in the European Union we will find the right answer to tackle the challenges that lay ahead of us. But we will have to work together with all generations to accomplish these goals. It has actually been shown that older adults are the most active voters during European elections and that they generally vote for parties that belong to the EPP. It is our task and duty to take into account the needs and expectations of the older generations, before, during and after the elections of 2019.

Dear friends, older generations perceived our Union as a necessity, as a dream that came true and built up step by step. They fought for freedom and democracy, for a Union in diversity, a Union in solidarity. For peace and prosperity and respect for every human person. Together with young generations we are ready to tackle new and unforeseen challenges. Offering our capacities, sharing our experiences. Hoping that together we will cope with different challenges, including those regarding demographic change. Stop ageism! Stop ageism and offer the all generations the rights and room they deserve.

An Hermans

President ESU