

Demographic change: One of the key challenges confronting Europe



ESU's statement on the position of the new European Commission on demographic change

Sandanski, 27-28 September 2019

We, the European Seniors' Union (ESU), representing senior citizens and seniors' associations linked to the European People's Party (EPP), gathered on 27-28 September in Sandanski, Bulgaria, for our 10th triennial congress. Peace, progress, prosperity, the initial objectives of the European cooperation, we don't take them for granted. We believe it is our duty to stand up for Europe and participate in shaping together the future of our society, economy and our planet.

We congratulate Dr. Ursula von der Leyen, the new President-Elect of the European Commission and express our appreciation for the political guidelines of the next European Commission 2019-2024. We welcome the determination and objectives that are set out to **answer to a multitude of challenges (changes in climate, digital technologies, geopolitics and demographic change)**, making important choices, and strengthening the links between people and the institutions that serve them, starting with building trust and confidence, based on the highest levels of responsibility, transparency and ethics. Moreover, we note with satisfaction that for the first time in European history, on the 10th of September 2019, the European Commission President-elect designated a Vice-President in charge of 'Democracy and Demography' and that, according to the mission letter of the appointed commissioner – Mrs. Dubravka Šuica -, she will lead the Commission's work on '*ensuring that Europe understands and responds to one of its deepest lying challenges: demographic change*'.

We recognize that this designation responds to our and other associations' call for the nomination of a Commissioner to lead Europe through the challenges and opportunities of demographic change. - See ESU Memorandum for the European Elections, 2019. - Furthermore, this is fully in line with the request of the EPP Congress document '*Europe secures our future*', adopted in the Congress in Malta (29-30 March 2017) wherein was called for '*a European strategy on demographic change*'.

We underline and voice older persons' need, expectations and concerns for '**a sustainable and inclusive society for all ages**' and call on policymakers at European, national and regional level to respond to demographic change:

1. **Recognizing the potential of older persons** by, empowering them to participate and contribute to society according to their capacities, needs and desires, and thereby combatting ageism as well as respecting their self-determination independence and dignity.
2. Turning the challenges of **ageing societies into creation of innovative and coordinated opportunities**, exploring the silver economy, promoting active and healthy ageing and fostering intergenerational dialogues and life-long learning.
3. Ensuring that the European initiatives responding to demographic change are **taking into account the specific experiences and individual needs in different parts of Europe**, facilitating the exchange of best practices and incorporating citizens' dialogues in preparation of a 'Green paper on Ageing'.

We emphasize that policies on demographic change are to be seen as a shared responsibility and include all areas of society. We, European Seniors' Union (ESU), are willing and ready to play an active part in responding the challenges of demographic change and in building the prosperous future of our Union.

**Adopted by the ESU Congress
Sandanski, 28 September 2019**