

# An unprecedented year



EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION

## Annual Report 2020

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# Foreword

The year 2020 had a promising start: a new EU parliament was elected. The European People's Party Group, as the largest in the European Parliament, was ready to defend the European values of freedom and democracy, peace and security, the rule of law and the social market economy in Europe and worldwide. Moreover, in the newly-appointed EU Commission, the mandate for 'Democracy and Demography' was entrusted to Vice-President Dubravka Šuica. These were just some of the many indications for a hopeful policy that puts people at the centre and opts for well-being and inclusion, solidarity and equality for every human being: young and old.

In this regard, our Association was coordinating the annual planning. With our three-yearly Congress (2019–[Sandanski](#)) fresh in our minds, the Sandanski Declaration was our compass towards a year full of engagement. This dedication and commitment is grounded in our conviction that seniors must share their experience with younger generations, and together with them, tackle the challenges for the future in terms of digitalization, demographic change, inclusive society, climate change... Furthermore, in 2020 we would celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of our organization: 'Madrid 1995–2020' would be a 'festive event', but 2020 evolved completely differently from what we hoped and expected...

2020 was also an unprecedented year for the ESU. In Prague (5–7th March 2020), we organized our first meeting of the year for members of the Presidium and the Executive Committee. It became a meeting to remember. Not because of the programme, which went smoothly; not because of the atmosphere among the participants, as there was a sense of strong connection; but as the days and hours progressed, the reports of the spread of the 'new COVID-19 virus' became more alarming. At the end of the meeting, we said goodbye to our hostess, ESU Vice President Lidmila Němcová, and shared the hope of a safe journey back home, but above all 'a reunion soon'. From then on, in mid-March, our ESU activities were marked by the far-reaching spread of the pandemic and the associated measures. How did we experience that period? How did we maintain and strengthen contacts between our member associations? How have we given voice to the questions, needs and hopes of senior citizens during this strange period? Please read it in this 2020 report: an unprecedented year.

We thank you for your involvement in our activities, your interest in our actions. We look forward to being together again in cordiality and solidarity. We wish you a pleasant reading.

**An Hermans**  
ESU President

<sup>14</sup>Seniors standing up for Europe –Engaging with citizens and developing a more united and democratic Union'; available for download from our ESU website: [http://esu-epp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Declaration\\_Sandanski\\_final\\_EN\\_adopted.pdf](http://esu-epp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Declaration_Sandanski_final_EN_adopted.pdf)

# In Memoriam

Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those who suffered from the COVID-19 disease, the victims, their families and loved ones.

Our Slovakian colleague, **Ing Ondrej Tunega**, passed away on Sunday 19 January 2020 at the age of 68. He was a vice-president of the Association of Christian Seniors of Slovakia. President An Hermans: *"We met Ondrej several times in our ESU-meetings and appreciated him as a very committed senior, with many plans for the future. We will miss him. He will continue to live with us in many beautiful memories"*.



Co-founder and former president of EZA (European Centre for Workers' Questions) and good friend **Leo Pauwels** passed away on Monday, 19 October 2020 at the age of 84. In his quality of capacity as honorary-president of EZA, he participated in some ESU events, EZA being an associated member of ESU. To whom it was given to those who met Leo Pauwels, he shared his conviction that Christian Social Teaching might inspire our social and political activities. Europe and European integration were the horizon of his tireless engagement. We express our sincere condolences to his family and friends. *"Leo Pauwels was rooted in the Christian social movement in Flanders; with an open heart and spirit for Europe. We remain grateful for his tireless efforts."* – An Hermans.



# The ESU and its Associations 1

## 1.1 THE PRESIDIUM

Hereby the composition of our motivated Presidium, as elected during our Sandanski Congress (2019). The Presidium works for the welfare of European seniors:

<b>President</b>
An Hermans (BE)
<b>Secretary general</b>
Guido Dumon (BE)
<b>Treasurer</b>
Etienne Vanderroost (BE)
<b>Vice-presidents</b>
Nikolay Andreev (BG)
Heinz K. Becker (AT)
Antonios Demetriades (CY)
Manfred Hopfengärtner (GE)
Astrid Lulling (LU)
Leena Jääskeläinen (FI)
Lidmila Nemcova (CZ)
Gabriele Peus-Bispinck (DE)
Carmen Quintanilla Barba (ES)
Ann Räämet (EE)
Christine von Stefenelli-Gostner (IT/ Südtirol)
Jozé Jurkovic (SL)
<b>Honorary Presidents</b>
Leif Hallberg (SE)
Elisabeth Dispaux (BE)
<b>Former President</b>
Bernhard Worms (DE)

## 1.2 ESU ASSOCIATIONS

Since its creation in 1995, the ESU has been the recognized seniors association and member of the EPP. We are a network of member associations from 27 countries:



## MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

### Austria

Österreichischer Seniorenbund

### Belgium

CD&V-senioren

Les Aînés du cdH

### Bulgaria

Seniors of GERB

### Croatia

Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica

### Cyprus

Senior Citizens Organisation of Cyprus

### Czech Republic

Sdružení křesťanských seniorů

### Estonia

Seniors' Association of pro Patria

### 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 Penjsonanti Anzjani

### The Netherlands

CDA Senioren

### Norway

Senior Høyres Landsforbund

### Poland

Polska Unia Seniorów (PUS)

Parlamentarzystow Ruchu Ludowego

### Slovakia

Zdruzenie kresťanských seniorov Slovenska

### Slovenia

Klub seniorjev in seniork pri SDS

Zveza seniorjev Nova Slovenija

Zveza upokojencev pri SLS

### Spain

Comisión Nacional del Mayor del Partido

Popular

### Sweden

Moderata Seniorer

Kristendemokraterna Seniorförbundet

## OBSERVER ASSOCIATIONS

### Armenia

Union of Senior Generation

### Belarus

PUBP “Nasha Pakalenne”

### Hungary

Kovács K. Zoltán Seniors' Club Association

### Serbia

Vajdasagi Magyar Szövetség Nyugdíjas

### Spain

Unio de la Gent Gran (UDC)

### Ukraine

Ukrainian Association of Retired Persons

### Europe

Europäische Zentrum für  
Arbeitnehmerfragen

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# 2020: the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the health and well-being of older persons





## 2.1 A PANDEMIC THAT AFFECTED ALL OF US

On 11th March 2020, [the World Health Organization](https://www.who.int)<sup>2</sup> (WHO) declared that the outbreak of the virus COVID-19 had reached the level of a 'global pandemic'. This world-wide health crisis concerned all and everyone. It became a health crisis, an economic crisis and the actions taken to stop the spread of the virus changed our way of (societal) life. People across Europe were suffering and had to cope with illness and death. Many people feared for their health and that of their loved ones. In addition, the economic impact of the pandemic has cost people their jobs and livelihoods, and has subsequently impacted people's well-being and mental health.

Managing the COVID-19 crisis in the first half of 2020 was predominantly shaped by distinct national approaches. Although several initiatives were taken at the European level, a coordinated European approach to cope with the crisis was missing. In vain citizens asked: "Where are the common European values of solidarity and respect for each person?" By the start of the summer, there was a growing awareness that the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis called for a common and innovative approach at EU level to support the recovery and resilience of Member States' economies.

In order to achieve the desired result and ensure its sustainability, the recovery effort had to be linked to the traditional Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), which has guided EU budgetary policy since 1988 and offers a long-term perspective. EU leaders agreed on a

comprehensive package of €1,824.3 billion, combining the MFF with an extraordinary recovery effort – the '[Next Generation EU](#)'<sup>3</sup>. The long-term EU budget and the 'Next Generation EU' will give the EU an unprecedented financial power to come out of the crisis stronger and to invest in necessary reforms like the European Green Deal, digitization and modernization of our Single Market. President von der Leyen emphasized the importance of the Next Generation EU recovery tool worth EUR 750 billion during her speech in front of the European Parliament (26/07/2020), and she said it was *"a magnificent signal of solidarity and willingness to reform. It should enable all EU countries to be in an equal position, to help their people and their businesses – without squeezing the life out of their public budgets."*

## 2.2 THE GRIM REALITY IN LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed many vulnerabilities of society, some are linked to the profound demographic change across Europe. Although all age groups are at risk of contracting COVID-19, the older generation has an increased risk of developing severe comorbidities in the event of an infection because of physical fragility and underlying health conditions (cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes...). Moreover, older persons living in long-term care facilities (LTCF) at a higher risk of infection due to living together in close contact.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.who.int>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2020/07/17-21/>

Their dramatic living and care conditions, the fragmented and chaotic management of the crisis, the suffering of residents and personnel caught the eye of public opinion and international and European institutions, including: the United Nations (UN), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the World Health Organization (WHO/ Europe), the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe (CoE)... Repeatedly, they expressed their concerns about older persons in LTCF as ‘often neglected, out of sight, being among the most vulnerable of all’ in our society.

*“The tragedy that Europe has experienced over the past weeks in its long-term care facilities is a stark reminder that member states ignore international human rights standards and expertise, and the recommendations of their own national human rights structures, at the peril of the lives of their own citizens. The absolute priority right now must be to make sure that this experience is never again repeated over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. But this should not detract from the urgency of the social care reforms that all European countries must undertake without fail to eliminate the root causes of this tragedy in the long run, and transition to long-term*

*care systems which put persons’ needs and dignity at their heart”*

Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, of the Council of Europe<sup>4</sup>

*“Invest in the overlooked and unsung: build sustainable people-centred long-term care in the wake of COVID-19”*

statement to the press by Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe<sup>5</sup>

*“Everyone has the same rights, no matter how old they are... As we transition to the ‘new normal’, governments must pay special attention to the needs of older people and ensure they are treated equally. Only then will older people be able to regain their lives in dignity and respect.”*

FRA director<sup>6</sup>, Michael O’Flaherty<sup>7</sup>

Many older people in care homes fell victim to COVID-19. Many also faced months of isolation and restrictions often harsher than those enforced for younger generations. During the pandemic, fundamental rights with regard to freedom were temporarily restricted in order to minimize the risk of contamination. This had a particularly profound impact on the lives of isolated seniors. Several institutions have made it clear, as has the ESU: ‘all initiatives, care services and restrictive measures must be supported by the principle of non-discrimination.’ Seniors also have the right to lead a life in dignity and independence, as enshrined in [Article 25](#) of the European Charter

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/lessons-to-be-drawn-from-the-ravages-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-in-long-term-care-facilities>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/regional-director/statements-and-speeches/2020/statement-invest-in-the-overlooked-and-unsung-build-sustainable-people-centred-long-term-care-in-the-wake-of-covid-19>

<sup>6</sup> For more information on FRA, see their website: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/about-fra>

<sup>7</sup> <https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2020/respect-older-peoples-rights-when-exiting-covid-19-pandemic>

of Fundamental Rights<sup>8</sup>. The tragedy that Europe has experienced over the past COVID-19 period in its long-term care facilities is a stark reminder that Member States cannot ignore international human rights standards and expertise, and the recommendations of national human rights structures<sup>9</sup>.

### 2.3 LESSONS TO BE DRAWN

There are several lessons to be drawn. At all levels of society, we have learned that governments and care institutions were not prepared for the COVID-19 disease and its consequences in terms of health and long-term care, social and economic life and social organisation. Let us summarise just some of the relevant lessons:

- We can only respond to this pandemic by working together, sharing knowledge and equipment. Therefore, it is even more necessary for the EU/EEA to seize this historic opportunity for reflection and rebuilding towards an inclusive and more resilient society for all. **A common European recovery strategy** and a common roadmap have led Member States to lift the measures of COVID-19, recognizing that society needs to be organized step by step, carefully and in the knowledge that the virus may strike again at any time.
- *“Europe can only recover together”* – we have marked and remembered the words of President von der Leyen. No Member State can face this crisis alone. Only together and in solidarity can we provide a coordinated and effective response to the

COVID-19 pandemic. The vulnerability of our **health services and LTCF** was unprecedented. It is time to **improve European coordination** and to support and strengthen Member States in these areas.

- **Health and care professionals** – especially many women – were at the forefront of this ‘fight’ against COVID-19. We paid tribute to their tireless efforts. But we have to definitively value and reward them optimally.
- During the crisis, all attention was paid to prevention of infection and health monitoring, but well-being is more than just physical health. In the future, we need to ensure that warm family and **social contacts**, which are vital to people’s lives, can be maintained.
- In times of (health) crises, communication is a keyword. In this regard, we must not forget the older generation, therefore we need to boost initiatives for healthy ageing and **life-long learning**. Whilst in some countries the use of digital communication is very common, also among older generations, in other regions many older persons never learned it, and are missing an important instrument to communicate. In an inclusive society, cohesion between groups requires that older persons also have access to available technology.

<sup>8</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>.  
<sup>9</sup> Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Statement, 20 May 2020.

## 2.4 THE ESU IN TIMES OF COVID-19: VIEWS AND ACTIONS

Shortly after the breakout of COVID-19 in Europe, we realized it was highly important to maintain contacts within the ESU. We've been in touch through the multitude of ways we've developed, we are happy and proud to list them briefly:

- Our **ESU Facebook page** was/is updated almost daily. And besides our own page, we were also able to follow the activities of our Associations through their Facebook accounts.
- The **ESU Newsletter** was our most comprehensive communication tool during the pandemic. We started in April and wrote two newsletters about the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the older generation. This newsletter became 'an interactive communication tool'. Colleagues from different countries reacted to our Newsletter, and we shared their stories. Our ESU members could read how people suffered deeply, but also how they developed innovative forms of solidarity. For a complete overview find the newsletters on our site<sup>10</sup>.

Many thanks to all who have contributed to making the ESU what we want to be during this period:

- **A network** of senior citizens' organizations, led by committed, active senior citizens who want to work for the well-being of their fellow citizens and who know that Europe is

the horizon of that well-being;

- **A platform** where we exchange experiences, find inspiration and learn from each other;
- **A bridge** between the European policy level and the home situation, between politicians and citizens.

In our newsletters, several testimonies followed with information about 'the home situation' of many of you. A special 'thank you' to: **Claus Bernhold, Rolf Berend, Gabriele Peus-Bispink, Heinz Becker, Carmen Quintanilla Barba, Bernard Worms, Edeltraud Paul, Ernest Margon, Leena Jääskeläinen, Sean Hawkes, Tatiana Zelko, Manfred Hopfengärtner, Lars O. Molin, Lidmila Němcová, Peter Mach, Miloš Nemeček, Maria Kanellopoulou, and Antonios Demetriades** for their contributions and their testimonials. Please see our newsletters from May to August for the content of their messages.

- The EPP also took initiatives to give the ESU a voice through online communication within the '**EPP family talks**'. Our President, An Hermans, has a recorded Skype meeting with EPP policy advisor Nathan Shepura on 29th April on the occasion of the **European Day of Solidarity between Generations**. This meeting has been viewed and shared many times<sup>11</sup>. We also appeared in the **EPP dispatch** mail with our ESU COVID-19 initiatives, activities and pictures.

<sup>10</sup> <http://esu-epp.eu/newsletter/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/epp.eu/videos/626265844957338>



- The ESU, in dialogue with its Executive Committee, prepared a resolution highlighting the concerns and rights of senior citizens, in particular during the COVID-19 health crisis: *“Europe’s Recovery; building the future of fair and resilient societies – including all generations”*. This resolution was a basis for drawing attention – in particular through the EPP – to policy aspects that concern seniors. Please find more information at 3.2.3.
- In a letter to EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Vice-President Dubravca Šuica and EPP President Donald Tusk, the ESU expressed its concerns at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic: respect for human rights, special attention to long-term care and a request for support for the digital training of senior citizens in the context of lifelong learning, but nevertheless we call also for older people to be informed in other ways than just digitally. Please find our letter attached to the Annual Report (see annexes).



# The ESU Bodies 3

## 3.1 THE CONGRESS

The Congress gathers every three years. During the Congress, the basic lines and political program of the organization are determined and statutory changes can be made. It also chooses the President, the Vice-Presidents, and at the recommendation of the President, it also elects a Secretary-General for a duration of three years. Delegates at the Congress are members of the Executive Committee and delegates from the national organizations, or in case there is no seniors' organization, the representative responsible for seniors' policy of the EPP member party. The Rules of Procedure of the EPP are usually adopted for usage at the Congress.

Our most recent Congress was the Sandanski Congress of 2019. During our 10th Congress in Sandanski, an amendment to the Statutes was implemented; the new version can be consulted on [our website](#). We hoped to organize an extraordinary Congress in 2020, but we had to postpone it.

## 3.2 THE PRESIDIUM

### 3.2.1. Overview of Presidium meetings in 2020

5/03/2020	Presidium meeting	Prague
27/07/2020	Presidium meeting	Video Meeting

### 3.2.2 Presidium meeting in Prague, 5/03/2020

Our first meetings in 2020 were in Prague.

As in previous years, Vice-President **Lidmila Němcová** took responsibility for local, practical arrangements and brought specific elements into the programme. Her cooperation is highly appreciated.

On the agenda of the administrative bodies were: the annual report of 2019, the financial results of the past years, the budget for 2020, decisions on the membership contribution and proposals for the up-coming events in 2020. The Presidium looked ahead to implement some proposals from the recent Congress in Sandanski.

### 3.2.3 Online Presidium meeting, 27/07/2020

On 27th July, our ESU Presidium met online. The main point on the agenda was the ESU resolution 'Europe's Recovery; building the future of fair and resilient societies - including all generations.'

A first draft of this resolution was already presented to the members of ESU Executive Committee during the videoconference of 4th July (see below). Amendments to this resolution had to be submitted by 25th July. A discussion on these amendments was held under the fluent guidance of ESU Vice-President Heinz Becker. It was an interactive meeting, where the proposed amendments were discussed and incorporated with respect for everyone's opinion. This resolution is a basis for drawing attention - in particular through the EPP - to policy aspects that concern seniors.



In a separate mail we sent the adopted resolution and also a press release to all delegates in the ESU Executive Committee.

Our resolution was sent to EPP President Donald Tusk, Secretary General Antonio López-Istúriz, President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen and European Commissioner for Democracy and Demography Dubravka Šuica. In addition, we also sent a personal email with our resolution text to all EPP members of the Parliamentary Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, Human Rights and Environment and Public Health and Food Safety. We hope that our work will inspire them in their parliamentary work. We invited them to spread in their turn the vision of seniors expressed in the ESU resolution.

After the adoption of the resolution by the ESU presidency, we submitted our document to the EPP Political Assembly, where President An Hermans presented it. The resolution was adopted during the EPP Political Assembly, on 28th September 2020. We present you the press release of our resolution, the full (EPP) version is available on the [EPP site](#).



## EUROPE'S RECOVERY; BUILDING THE FUTURE OF FAIR AND RESILIENT SOCIETIES - INCLUDING ALL GENERATIONS

The COVID-19 worldwide health crisis concerned all and everyone. Older persons faced a significant risk of developing a severe COVID-19 contamination. ESU wants to call on all governments and stakeholders to work together for a resilient recovery for all generations.

The ESU urges that older persons' human rights must be protected on an equal basis with others; advanced age should never by itself be a criterion for excluding persons from specialized care. Fighting discrimination and abuse of older persons involves fighting ageism as a structural factor of stereotyping. Adapted social support and smart efforts to reach older persons could – and can – help older persons to maintain the feeling of 'being part of a community' and diminish the risk of social isolation.

We must entrust the EU with the development of Europe-wide Pandemic-concepts and support the Member States to strengthen their systems in the field of public health. Taking into account the challenge of a growing demand for sufficient, accessible, good quality and affordable health and long-term care services as enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Our societies need health, social and long-term care systems that provide individualized support to older persons, while promoting their full inclusion in the community. Therefore, we call for the integration of long-term care in the Social Scoreboard indicators, feeding into the preparation of the Country Reports in the context of the European Semester. It complements the more qualitative assessment of economic and social challenges across the EU.

All generations count the same and must be heard in the upcoming process of European recovery. Therefore, we recommend that all social, economic and humanitarian responses must take the needs of seniors fully into account. Initiatives for healthy ageing and life-long learning including digital skills need to be boosted and rural depopulation combined with an ageing population require ambitious investments to attract the youth, create jobs and make rural areas vibrant while also developing adapted services for all generations. Seniors are and want to be part of all areas of society. The crisis has highlighted, again, the power and importance of solidarity. “Life time healthy ageing” concerns all generations.

3.3 Executive Committee

3.3.1. Overview of ExCo meetings in 2020

6/03/2020	Executive Committee	Prague	Seniors exploring the future of Europe
4/07/2020	Executive Committee	Video Meeting	Preserve and strengthen the European idea

3.3.2 Seniors exploring the future of Europe, 6/03/2020

Nearly 45 delegates from across Europe participated in the meetings of the ESU Presidency and Executive Committee. In line with the proposals of the Presidium, the Executive Committee has been taking decisions on the finances, the membership fee, and the planning of upcoming events. After discussions and exchanges of experience from across Europe, President An Hermans and Secretary General Guido Dumon thanked all delegates for their cooperation and called for strengthening the bridge between senior citizens’ associations in their own countries and the ESU at European level. Our President expressed her special thanks to everyone who contributed to the realizations of the past year, in particular the Secretary General, Guido Dumon and Treasurer Etienne Vanderroost. President Hermans called on all participants to continue to be actively involved as ambassadors of the ESU.

At the end of the meeting, the Executive Committee adopted a resolution tabled by the German delegation of CDU and CSU: ‘Brutalization of language, violence against people: danger to society, peace, democracy and the rule of law’ (see: English<sup>12</sup> and German<sup>13</sup>

versions). Since most delegates recognized this behaviour in their own country, they were encouraged to emphasize this problem at home as well.

Following the administrative meeting of the Executive Committee, Vice-President Lidmila Němcová presented an interesting information program. See: 4.1.1

### 3.3.3 Preserve and strengthen the European idea, 4/07/2020

For 10 years, the members of the ESU Ex-Co met for the Summer Academy (SA) in Vienna. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and together with our Austrian colleagues from the Österreichischer Seniorenbund (ÖSB), we decided to cancel our SA, planned for 1-4 July 2020. Also in 2021, the Summer Academy will be held online.

However, we felt the need to strengthen contacts with our members and organized a video conference on 4th July. We welcomed:

- a statement by **Claus Bernhold**, Deputy Chairman of the Senioren-Union of the CDU in Germany, concerning the German presidency of the Council of the EU for the next six months;

*“maintaining and preserving the European idea is one of the focal points of the political activities of the senior citizens in the CDU. The goal is to preserve and strengthen the European idea.*

*Cuts such as Britain’s exit from the Union must not endanger the common idea. Living and maintaining our values*

*and interests only works as a community.”*

The statement is available in [German & English](#)<sup>12</sup> on our website.

- an analysis by Prof. **Steven Van Hecke** (KU Leuven), about today’s EU challenges, member states’ reactions, ‘Corona-nationalisms’ and the need for cooperation towards recovery;
- **Heinz K. Becker** (ESU Vice President, former MEP), concerning the EPP party’s initiative to prepare a ‘vision text’ for the next EPP Congress and some opportunities for the ESU to cooperate in the development;
- Secretary General **Guido Dumon**, regarding the agenda of the coming months and announcing the first draft of the resolution that the ESU wants to submit to the EPP Political Assembly in September: ‘Europe’s Recovery; building the future of fair and resilient societies including all generations’;
- interventions by several participants about the situation in their country.

In this COVID-19 pandemic, all of us were confronted with a wide range of unforeseen difficulties. Organizing and participating in a videoconference also brought us into a ‘learning situation’ with some difficulties we had to overcome. The support of the Communications Department of the EPP Party was very useful, and we hope to improve the capacities of ESU seniors in this area in the near future.

<sup>12</sup> [http://esu-epp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Prague\\_resolutionBernhold\\_EN\\_final.pdf](http://esu-epp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Prague_resolutionBernhold_EN_final.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [http://esu-epp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Prague\\_resolutionBernhold\\_DE\\_final.pdf](http://esu-epp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Prague_resolutionBernhold_DE_final.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [http://esu-epp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Statement-Tolko-ESU-4.7.2020\\_DEEN.pdf](http://esu-epp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Statement-Tolko-ESU-4.7.2020_DEEN.pdf)

# 4 — Representation of the ESU

## 4.1 PARTICIPATION IN THE EPP

Since its founding in 1995, the ESU functions as a member association of the EPP, supporting the values and perspectives of the EPP, participating in the party's activities and highlighting the active role of seniors in society, especially in politics. This year, of course, the EPP had to change its plans for 2020. At the Zagreb Congress in 2019, Joseph Daul finished his mandate as President of the EPP and Donald Tusk was elected. New challenges in Europe and in the world and also inside the EPP lay ahead: what kind of Europe do we want to build? How to act in politics while respecting ethics and human values the EPP is based on? Which agenda for Europe to keep sovereignty in a dangerous world? What about human rights and the rule of law in the EU member states? The EPP hoped to cope with these questions in the run up to a Congress announced for 2020, but as with so many activities, due to the COVID-19 pandemic this Congress had to be postponed to 2021. Since March 2020, almost all meetings in which the ESU is mandated to participate were organized 'online'. The ESU participated actively in these meetings, calling for special political attention for vulnerable persons during the pandemic, in particular older persons in LTCF and in reporting the concerns of our members' associations. We were glad that the EPP listened to our concerns as was expressed by the support we received for the resolution we submitted.

### 4.1.1 EPP- Political Assembly

In the Political Assembly, the ESU has two representatives and the right to vote for one representative. An Hermans and Guido Dumon undertake this representation. The EPP Political

Assembly meeting of 28th September was very important for the ESU. The ESU submitted and presented the resolution: 'Europe's recovery: building the future of fair and resilient societies - including all generations'. The EPP adopted it as an EPP resolution. We hope that it will inspire also the daily political actions of decision makers.

#### **4.1.2 EPP - Working Groups**

Working Groups related to the Political Assembly are the backbone of the EPP's political work, where representatives from the EPP member parties and associations develop common positions and strategies on major policy areas and submit specific recommendations to the Political Assembly for final approval. The ESU has representatives in every Working Group.

##### **EPP WORKING GROUP 1**

The Chairwoman of this working group is Ms Esther de Lange, EPP Vice President. Working Group 1 focuses on 'European Policy' and has the ambition of preparing a new, vital policy document, updating the current EPP Platform, adopted in Bucharest in 2012, and exposing EPP's positioning in the political spectrum in Europe. As Europe has faced many challenges during the past decade, putting the EU and its institutions almost permanently in a crisis modus, it is time to highlight and emphasize our fundamental values, future perspectives and strategies. ESU Vice President Heinz Becker is representing the ESU in this working group and reports regularly about its activities. In the near future, the document 'The Europe we want to build; emphasizing our values and responding to new challenges' will be available, and we will have the opportunity to amend it if necessary. At the end of 2021 it will be submitted to the EPP Congress.

##### **EPP WORKING GROUP 3**

Chaired by EPP Vice-President and MEP Paulo Rangel, Working Group 3 'Membership' is mandated to promote, facilitate and incorporate new EPP members, as-sociate 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 organizations. ESU Vice President Nikolay Andreev (BG) and president An Hermans represent the ESU in this working group. Next to discussions on the applications for membership of the EPP, the developments and problems in neighbouring countries are regularly on the agenda. In previous months, at the request of our partners, we were interested in particular and expressed our concerns about the democratic opposition and the respect for human rights in Belarus and in Nagorno-Karabakh.

##### **EPP WORKING GROUP 4**

This working group 'Foreign Policy' is chaired by EPP Secretary General Antonio López-Istúriz White. ESU Secretary General Guido Dumon represents the ESU in this working group. It is a new working group, started recently and has prepared a position paper on the relations between the EU and China.

## 4.2 REPRESENTATION IN AGE PLATFORM EUROPE

The representation in AGE Platform Europe has been very important to the ESU. AGE, which was set up in Brussels in 2001, is a broad European network and aims to voice and promote the interests of the EU's ageing generations. AGE is 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.

In 2020 Leif Hallberg, former vice-president of the ESU, was succeeded by Ghislaine Van Halewyn as ESU representative at AGE Platform Europe. After the first (online) meetings Ghislaine Van Halewyn wrote:

**“AGE’s vision is based on solidarity and cooperation between generations. However, COVID-19 aggravated the disastrous situations that many older people in different European countries had already experienced before the pandemic. It is therefore important to ensure that age or disability cannot be a criterion for medical triage. Furthermore, older people must have a say in the public debate and be consulted on the proposed measures.**

**The epidemic has given a boost to digitization. Although many older people are online, others are at great risk of isolation and lack of access to necessary services. In the future, it will be a question of strengthening the rights of seniors in times of digitization.”**

As a founding member of AGE, the ESU will continue to cooperate with AGE and defend the rights of older persons, supporting their resilience to participate in society.





# ESU Conferences & other activities 5

Numerous activities throughout the year reflect the solidarity and common objectives of the member associations of the ESU to work together and stand up for a fair and united Europe of peace, security and prosperity. The moments typified below are so-called 'crystallization points' of our objectives and commitment. The COVID-19 pandemic and its many constraints and new challenges created a whole new context... But we stand firm.

## 5.1 CONFERENCES IN 2020

### 5.1.1 Overview of ESU Conferences in 2020

5-7/03/2020	Prague	Seniors exploring the future of Europe
6/11/2020	Online	'Let's be guardians of an ethical dimension of politics'

### 5.1.2 Seniors exploring the future of Europe, 5-7/03/2020

During this event in Prague we welcomed several interesting speakers who introduced the audience to the challenges and opportunities of the near European future: Mr. **Jan Bartošek**, Vice-President of the Christian democratic political party KDU-ČSL, leader of the Christian deputies Club presented the actual strategy of KDU-ČSL

– with regards to the political and economic situation in the Czech Republic and the EU; **Peter Mach**, President of the ZKS – Slovakia, former Director of the Slovak Statistical Office focused on Demographic development in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia in comparison with the EU. In line with Eurostat, he distinguished three age groups: 'young older people', from 65 to 79 years old; 'old people', over 80 years old yours and 'very old people', over 90 years old. He stressed that life expectancy is still increasing and that the future quality of life and state of health of older people is improving. Jan Málek, political scientist, director of the European Academy of Democracy in Prague, presented an analysis of the development of politics in the CR. He presented the political priorities and expectations for the near future and described how the KDU-CSL is struggling with the tendencies of populists, both in government and in society as a whole.

Prof. **Steven Van Hecke**, KU Leuven, presented the successes and failures of recent European policy and highlighted future challenges and perspectives. After reflection by delegates from all over Europe (on migration, on border control, on the need to implement the social pillar, on climate change...) and dynamic discussions, we could count on Vice-President Heinz Becker to

express the concerns, disappointments, but also the expectations and hopes of senior citizens in Europe in a motion for a resolution.

### 5.1.3 'Let's be guardians of an ethical dimension of politics', 6/11/2020

What better way to honour all those who have committed themselves to the creation and development of our association than by looking ahead? By looking to the future and participating in society, by trying to improve the society in which we live? In order to look ahead and inspire all participants for further actions, we organized a video conference on 6th November 2020 with a diverse programme of high-level speakers. Nearly 45 seniors attended our videoconference.

We happily share some of the highlights of our meeting:

- The preparation and quality of participation is very important in order to encourage senior citizens to take part in the meeting. The simultaneous interpretation was certainly a facilitation. The whole programme was an organic construction around the importance of ethics in political relations, inspired by the [remarks](#) of EPP president Donald Tusk during the Political Assembly (28th September 2020); Prof Woopen called it 'a valuable event (...) and the different perspectives fitted perfectly together'.
- In the first part of the programme we enjoyed listening to **Mr Antonio Lopez-Isturiz White**. Mr Lopez, as Secretary-General of the EPP and Member of the European Parliament, is for us a strong and direct link with the EPP. He proposed a

number of challenges facing Europe and the EPP. We appreciate his assessment of the role of the ESU. He thanked the ESU for its contribution to the EPP over the years.

*“Europe can only survive if it involves its senior citizens and the ESU has always worked tirelessly to express their concerns. The EPP stands for intergenerational solidarity and respect for human dignity. We want our senior citizens to be more involved in the process of recovering from the pandemic in Europe and to help us implement the policies that provide security, well-being and quality of life for our citizens”* Antonio Lopez

Following this important and more general part relating to the anniversary of the ESU, President An Hermans expressed the Association's general hope that in the future we will have a joyful and festive celebration in which we can greet and embrace each other personally.

- We were honoured to welcome Dr. **Christiane Woopen** from the University of Cologne. Christiane Woopen is a medical ethicist. She is Professor for Ethics and Theory of Medicine and Executive Director of CERES (Cologne Centre for Ethics, Rights, Economics, and Social Sciences of Health).

She chairs the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE). EGE provides the European Commission with high quality, independent advice on ethical aspects of science and new technologies in relation to EU legislation or policies. During spring EGE presented a statement on [‘European Solidarity and the Protection of Fundamental Rights in the COVID-19 Pandemic’](#)<sup>15</sup>.

Recently in November, EGE also published: [‘Improving pandemic preparedness and management – Lessons learned and ways forward’](#). We invited her to present her reflections on the political management of the recent health crisis and, in particular, on how society and policymakers looked at the senior citizens, health care for senior citizens and well-being in the Long-Time Care Facilities (LTCF). Prof. Dr. Woopen’s presentation was highly appreciated and further deepened by questions from our moderator, Prof. Steven Van Hecke. Especially the multidisciplinary approach was remarkable. Both medical and psycho-social as well as economic and ethical aspects received attention. We therefore invite you to check out her [PPT](#).

- After the presentation of Prof. Dr. Woopen, reactions, considerations and questions were addressed through the expert guidance of Prof. Steven Van Hecke. First of all, by ESU Vice-President **Heinz Becker** and Mrs. **Margareta Pålsson** President of the Swedish Seniors’ Association Moderata Seniorer. Other participants (from the Netherlands,

Germany...) also drew attention to the suffering COVID-19 is causing in their country and are exploring appropriate treatment and political procedures to incorporate parliaments and civil society in decision-making. The need for cooperation and solidarity also emerges. ‘In Europe we can only recover together’ President Ursula von der Leyen repeated several times. A question that concerns many citizens is: how can cooperation be optimized and how the EU will/can play a (leading) role?

- The answers to these questions were given by **Federico Reho**. He is Strategic Coordinator and Research Officer of the Martens Center and published a research paper concerning: [‘Does the EU have sufficient healthcare competences to cope with COVID-19?’](#). We invited him to sketch the contours of what the EU can and cannot do to cope with the unprecedented health challenges. We know that the EU has few competences with regard to health care, but it is certainly important in view of ‘the future of Europe’ to discuss the expectations of citizens or to propose greater attention for health and long-time care within the framework of the European Semester – resulting in country-specific advice – and the further elaboration of the European Pillar of Social Rights (principle 16).

The current pandemic and the need for cooperation have highlighted the need for a European health policy. Ursula von der Leyen recently mentioned ‘A European Health Union’. But... even without drastic changes in

<sup>15</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/research\\_and\\_innovation/eg\\_e\\_rtd\\_ege-statement-covid-19.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/research_and_innovation/eg_e_rtd_ege-statement-covid-19.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> more information about EGE can be found here: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/support-policy-making/scientific-support-eu-policies/eg\\_e\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/support-policy-making/scientific-support-eu-policies/eg_e_en)



strengthening role in health policy. The EU's role in fighting pandemics can be reinforced under the current treaties. Art. 168(1) states:

*“the European Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, may also adopt incentive measures to tackle common challenges, such as pandemics or the risk factors associated with chronic diseases”*

COVID-19 seems the sort of “cross-border health scourge” which these provisions are meant to help the EU manage. Uncoordinated “national” measures can cause significant damage. Close coordination of national reactions to a pandemic like COVID-19 has to be mandated, for example a timely restriction of mobility and a temporary reintroduction of some border checks. A stronger coordination by means of a permanent and effective network of national health authorities, both scientific and political, working and deciding together, is needed.

After two hours of interesting speeches, interventions, discussions... ESU President An Hermans closed the meeting by thanking everyone and imagining the perspective of the near future.

*“With our knowledge and experience, we will continue to stress the importance of involving senior citizens in the development of measures and regulations that affect them; we want to be part of the political decision-making process to optimize the management of the current health crisis; as part of civil society; we are trying to help*

*and support our fellow citizens, and we hope that: ‘together we will overcome this crisis’. Therefore, the inspiration of scientists is a gift which we are grateful to make use of.”*

## 5.2 29TH APRIL & 1ST OCTOBER, TWO DATES TO HIGHLIGHT

### 5.2.1 European Day of Solidarity between Generations, 29/04/2020

#### EXPRESSING SENIORS' CONCERNS

On this year's European Day of Solidarity between Generations, we underlined the need for solidarity to overcome the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 virus. Especially when intergenerational contacts are limited for a certain period of time, we need to stress that solidarity, including intergenerational solidarity, is a pillar of the European social and economic system. In a letter to EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Vice-President Dubravca Šuica and EPP President Donald Tusk, the ESU expressed its concerns: respect for human rights, special attention to long-term care and a request for support for the digital training of senior citizens in the context of lifelong learning.

*“Solidarity: one of the cornerstones of an inclusive, sustainable society. In these recent months of a global, painful pandemic, this is the key word to open doors to medical and economic solutions, to open doors to ‘the day after’ this unforeseen and unpredictable crisis that is approaching.*

*Solidarity: we have seen and experienced brilliant examples in recent days. However, it is also sad, very sad and unforgivable that we have once again witnessed a lack of solidarity in our Europe. “Please do not let us die”, that was the message from our fellow citizens of southern European countries, who hoped in vain that they would be able to count on European solidarity. It seems that, until now, we have not learnt what it means that solidarity is the foundation of Europe, what it means to build, step by step, ‘an ever-closer Union’, a union between nations and peoples, expressed in decision-making mechanisms, through economic integration, through budget transfers, financial aid, support programmes... We hoped that, in this COVID-19 crisis, European solidarity and mutual aid could and should be expressed in a clear and coordinated way. But Europe was not ready. The Member States were not ready... It was only after long and difficult discussions that coordinated European solutions were found: necessary signs of European solidarity, like European citizens expect and deserve.”*

From the letter of ESU president An Hermans to the ESU members.

We received positive reactions and a supporting letter from EPP President **Donald Tusk**:

*“The EPP is very grateful for the important work ESU is doing to keep in contact with our senior citizens, exchange best practices and put forward concrete proposals to tackle together the challenge represented by the COVID-19 virus.*

*As you point out in your letter, only by acting together as a Union will we be able to fight this unprecedented health and economic crisis and emerge from it stronger than ever, protecting both our citizens and the European project. Seniors are among the groups of people the most affected by this virus as well as by its social consequences. As EPP, we remain committed to protecting the most vulnerable among us, ensuring equal access to healthcare and promoting solidarity among member countries but also among generations. Once the emergency is over, we will have to rethink our health systems, our workplaces and the functioning of our economies and societies and I count on ESU to continue providing us with its precious input to this end.”*

Several member associations were inspired by our initiative and took similar initiatives in their home countries.



### 5.2.2. 1st October: The International Day of Older Persons

Each year on 1st October, we celebrate the International Day of Older Persons worldwide. This year, the celebration was over-shadowed by the unprecedented health crisis, posing grave challenges for societies in Europe and all around the world. The [UN 2020 theme<sup>17</sup>](https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/international-day-of-older-persons-homepage/2020unidop.html) is therefore in line with these events: *“Pandemics: Do They Change How We Address Age and Ageing?”* It was an invitation to reflect on the way older persons were treated, viewed and represented during the recent crisis. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic, which started as a health crisis and evolved into an economic and social crisis, affected almost every aspect of our daily lives.

Very soon a clear common trend emerged: a much higher infection and death rate among older persons. In particular, older persons living in long-term care facilities and their relatives have experienced a dramatic process of loss and pain and are at risk of losing their fundamental rights. The recent sense of relief associated with the gradual reopening of economies, schools, tourism and cultural and social events cannot mask the continuing impact of the pandemic. In addition, governments need to implement recovery processes, and lessons need to be learned to respond to the challenges ahead.



<sup>17</sup> <https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/international-day-of-older-persons-homepage/2020unidop.html>

### 5.2.3 Supporting civil society in Belarus

We, as the European Seniors' Union (ESU), have repeatedly called for our future societies to be more resilient and fairer and to give European citizens the rights and opportunities they deserve. This call is more urgent now than ever. It's about the kind of society we want to live in and that we want to pass on to our children and grandchildren, to all future generations. On the road to that society we wanted to place four 'signposts', inspired by sometimes heart-warming, but often also painful experiences of and with seniors during the last few months. In her letter written at the occasion of the International Day of Older Persons, President An Hermans developed the following points:

1. Respect for human dignity;
2. Fighting ageism;
3. Solidarity: one of the cornerstones of European societies;
4. Resilient citizens included in decisions that affect their lives.

You can read the ESU message on the occasion of the International Day for Older Persons in four languages on [our website](#).



## 5.3 OTHER ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

### 5.3.1 ESU greetings to the seniors' union NSi-Nova Slovenija

This year the political party, Nova Slovenija proudly celebrated its 20th anniversary. Several events were organized to reflect on the history of the party, on the history of Slovenia and to meet the challenges of the future. On 7th September, the President of the EPP, Mr. Donald Tusk, visited Slovenia and met various political actors of today, including Ms. Ljudmila Novak, Member of the European Parliament.

On 29.09.2020: it was up to the Seniors' Union NSi-Nova Slovenia to organize a festive gathering to celebrate Nova Slovenia's 20th anniversary. Several speakers took the floor (Mr. Zdravko Luketič, Mrs. Ljudmilla Novak, Mr. Jože Strgar...). The participants enjoyed a cultural program and were very interested in the presentation of the book by Dr. Jože Možina on the history of Slovenia. As ESU, we were pleased to be invited to 'virtually' attend this ceremonial session of the Seniors' Union NSi. – Nova Slovenija, which was founded in 2004.

President An Hermans addressed the Slovenian seniors via a video message:

*“Dear friends, Slovenia is a young, independent nation. The complex history of your country, your own life story, the changing environment in which you live, reflect Slovenia's quest for freedom, for democracy, for peace, for the well-being of its people. And we know it: in Europe we have to build this strength, this unity, step by step and every day.*

*The responsibility to work together in Europe is not only a responsibility for governments, for heads of state and for industries ... it is a challenge for all of us.” You can find the video message on [our website](#).*

It was a real pleasure to be connected with our colleagues and express our hopes and wishes for the future. Our ESU delegate, Ernest Morgan added: *“it was a rich and very educational session and celebration, of course limited by a number of visitors because of COVID-19. We concluded the sessions by expressing our hopes for better times in the future”.*

### 5.3.2 Supporting civil society in Belarus

Our President An Hermans has made a short [video statement](#)<sup>18</sup> on the situation in Belarus:

*“As President of the European Seniors Union (ESU), a network of seniors’ associations in Europe, I like to express my support to the democratic opposition in Belarus. Belarus has been in the midst of a political crisis since the disputed presidential elections (9th August) led to an uprising against authoritarian President Lukashenko. After several months, the non- violent demonstrations have continued across the country. Young and old, men and women have joined forces to demonstrate peacefully, calling for democracy, calling for fair election results, for a peaceful country to live in. The regime’s only response was brutal action. Thousands of peaceful protesters have been arrested, and several individuals have been reported missing. Numerous sources indicate that Belarusian officials have subjected hundreds of people to mistreatment during their imprisonment.”*

In summary, here is the main message:

- a) Release of all political prisoners;
- b) New and fair elections in Belarus;
- c) Stop repressions and punishment of protesters, and of course:
- d) Resignation of Lukashenko.

Besides the general disapproval of the Belarusian crisis... we are also thinking of Tatiana Zelko, President of the Association “Our Generation” in Belarus. She is very active in the demonstrations. Every Monday there is a ‘demonstration of seniors’ and she is on the front line of it.



<sup>18</sup> <https://www.dropbox.com/s/r74t9bdxolda/rx/An%20Hermans%20Belarus.mp4?dl=0>



#### 5.4 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESU

Our Association is turning 25 years 'old'! After much preparatory work, the establishment of the ESU was organized in Madrid on 7th November 1995. This year in November, we would have celebrated the 25th anniversary of its foundation: "Madrid 1995-2020" on the initiative of ESU Vice-President Carmen Quintanilla. But 2020 was very different from what we hoped and expected...

##### 5.4.1 The 25th anniversary reflected in the Newsletters

However, we could not let this celebration go unnoticed and therefore asked in our September Newsletter for some personal testimonies on ESU's role. In the October Newsletter we shared these reflections with our members. The newsletters gave members the opportunity to exchange memories of the ESU's 25-year history and the relevance of our organization. Once again we say a special 'thank you' to all those who wrote a contribution for the ESU newsletter: **Bernard Worms, Elisabeth Dispaux-Cornil, Heinz Becker, Lidmila Němcová, Gabriele**

**Peus-Bispinck, Claus Bernhold, Rolf Berend, Antonios Demetriades and Vaclav Roubal.**

You can read their testimonials in full text on [our website](#).

##### **Dr Bernard Worms, former ESU President:**

*"At the end of 1989, it was Dr Kohl who, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, in his deliberations on the formation of a European Union, drew particular attention to the importance of the older generation (the Second World War and its consequences) for the future of Europe. In 1990, he gave me the task, as the newly-elected Federal President of the Seniors' Union, to make an immediate and very sustained effort to ensure that a seniors' association within the EPP on European soil will be established. After nearly five years of discussion, particularly among Belgian, Luxembourg, Austrian and German seniors, all of whom had been sent by their home countries to set up an independent seniors' association within the EPP, and with the approval of the EPP (a decision of the Executive Committee), the EPP decided that on 7th November 1995 in MADRID, the European Seniors' Union (ESU) was established."*

**Elisabeth Dispaux-Cornil, former ESU vice-president:** “Why ESU ? Because we must continue to participate and with our experience, we must contribute to the elaboration of the decisions that directly concern us and above all that concern each one of us.”

**Heinz Becker, ESU Vice-President:**

“As a leading force in European seniors’ policy, the ESU is fully anchored in the values and principles of the European People’s Party; since a quarter of a century, the ESU network of 34 member organizations in 27 countries has successfully represented a large population group of older people in society, actively promoting the interests and rights of seniors at all political levels and in all relevant subject areas, in particular anti-discrimination and upholding of respect and dignity; it supports intergenerational justice and dialogue between young and old in full solidarity, participation in social security, active ageing, lifelong learning, initiatives in healthcare and nursing, as well as the role of seniors as the largest purchasing-power group in the silver economy.”

**Lidmila Němcová, ESU Vice-President:**

“I was very glad that the importance of ethical way of thinking and acting created the basis of our ESU activities. The common ESU publication “My Story – Our Europe” about the importance of the Christian values helped the senior writers to overcome the life obstacles under different conditions. Yes, dignity of any person, truth, justice, human solidarity and democracy should be cultivated at any time. The booklet was a document for younger generations establishing a framework of further needed intergenerational cooperation.”

**Gabriele Peus-Bispinck, ESU Vice-President:**

“ESU is an important network of older citizens from almost 30 European countries who work together for an age-friendly Europe. ESU is a stable pillar in a Europe of citizens. ESU members are aware of the hopes and problems of older people and can, through their involvement in the EPP, contribute to important political issues.”

Claus Bernhold, Deputy Chairman of the Senioren-Union of the CDU in Germany and ESU ExCo member: “Many of my generation still have painful memories of the time of World War II. Our life story has made the conviction grow that such wars and crimes must never be repeated. The European People’s Party (EPP), as well as the European Seniors’ Union (ESU) and the European Union emerged as a consequence and result of the devastating experiences of the 20th century. For me, this Europe is the greatest peace movement in our time.”

**Rolf Berend, former MEP, member of the national board of the Senioren-Union-CDU, and member of the Executive Committee of the ESU:** “It was only with the reunification of

Germany in 1990 – I had the honour of contributing as a member of the first and last freely elected National Assembly in the GDR – which was also the beginning of the unification of our European continent, that our lives changed fundamentally. As a politician, I have seen and still see it as an essential task to help this Europe growing together again and is always “breathing well on both lungs”. In my almost 20 years as a Member of the European Parliament, I have been able to help shape European integration in Strasbourg and Brussels. Since my retirement, the focus of my political activity has been on working in the Seniors’ Union, not only in Germany but also in Europe.”



**Antonios Demetriades, ESU Vice-President:**

*“Cyprus Seniors are very proud to belong to such a European Seniors’ Union. The key challenge of all European Societies is the demographic change, with an increasing generation of the elderly and a decreasing birth rate of younger people. Europe needs the creation of an age-friendly European Union designated to support every age. We, as European Seniors, have a role to play and must work together with the new generation towards a better and safer Europe, encouraging the public to invest in youth skills training and most importantly to control migration. We thank all who have contributed towards ESU in its entire 25 year history...”*

**Vaclav Roubal, former ESU Vice-President:**

*“The membership of our SKS of the Czech Republic in the ESU has opened the door to Europe for us, especially due to the opportunities the ESU offered to our SKS Association of the Czech Republic to organize ESU regional conferences. These conferences present a great enrichment to the participants in these seniors’ meetings. The discussed topics of the experiences of senior citizens from all over the EU provide good incentives for the participants to work for the senior citizens of their country...”*





### 5.4.2 ESU Timeline<sup>19</sup>

1995	<b>Founding Congress in Madrid</b> Stefan Knafl was elected as new ESU President
1996	<b>2nd Congress in Vienna</b> It was attended by EPP President Martens. It focused on three topics: (1) peace in Europe, security and order in monetary policies; (2) prosperous economies as a basis for guaranteed pensions; (3) collaboration in all areas that concern older people.
1999	<b>3rd Congress in Cologne</b> Theme: <i>'Seniors shape Europe of the 21st century'</i> . Former Chancellor Helmut Kohl participated 'as one of the "architects" of this Europe as an honorary guest.
2001	<b>4th Congress in Brussels</b> Bernhard Worms was elected as new ESU President. Theme of this year's Congress was the Integration of Europe and its Eastern Enlargement. ( <i>Prominent guests were EPP President Martens, EPP Group President Pöttering and European Commissioner Viviane Reding.</i> )
2004	<b>5th Congress in Bonn/Bad Godesberg</b> Special guest speakers were Angela Merkel, Helmut Kohl and Hans-Gert Pöttering. The Bonn Declaration: "Responsible – Bold – Challenging" was adopted.
2005	<b>Celebration of 10 years ESU in Madrid</b> <i>'Senior Citizens in Europe – Mainstays in a Changing World'</i> was the theme of the event. Guests of honour were, among others, EPP Secretary General Antonio López-Istúriz and Mariano Rajoy Brey, President of the Partido Popular.
2007	<b>6th Congress at Pulheim</b> As the theme of the Congress was: <i>'Old and young together – guaranteeing the future of Europe'</i> , it was not a surprise that also younger representatives, like the President of the Youth of the EPP (YEPP), Yannis Smyrlis, were among the speakers.

2010	<b>7th Congress in Bad Honnef</b> The working theme of the seventh Congress was <i>'Senior citizens – a pillar of our society'</i> . It focused on social commitment and the contribution of older people in society. <b>First Summer Academy in Vienna</b>
2013	<b>8th Congress in Brussels</b> The theme of the Congress that year was <i>'Together towards an age-friendly society'</i> . Current ESU President <b>An Hermans</b> was elected as new ESU President. Important speakers were Hans-Gert Pöttering, YEPP President Konstantinos Kyranakis, European Democrat Students (EDS) President Eva Majewski, Vice-President of the European Commission Viviane Reding, EPP Deputy Secretary General Christian Kremer and President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy
2015	<b>Celebration 20th anniversary of the ESU in Brussels</b> <i>'Continuing the road towards a value driven Europe'</i> <sup>20</sup> . Among the guest speakers was Marianne Thyssen.
2016	<b>9th Congress in Leuven</b> The theme was: <i>'Together for a safe and social Europe'</i> <sup>21</sup> . These topics were covered: (1) the necessity to regain the trust of the citizens; (2) the justified expectation that Europe promotes economic growth and social protection and stimulates an inclusive society, in which older persons are also fully valued; (3) managing the refugee and migration crisis and guaranteeing security and safety for all citizens.
2019	<b>10th Congress in Sandanski</b> The theme: <i>'Seniors standing up for Europe'</i> <sup>22</sup> . Through the Sandanski Declaration: <i>'Seniors standing up for Europe – Engaging with citizens and developing a more united and democratic Union'</i> , the Congress underlined the role of citizens as active partners in policymaking. <b>10th Summer Academy in Vienna</b>
2020	<b>25th anniversary of the ESU</b> Celebration postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic

<sup>19</sup> THEUGELS, J., Seniors, Party Politics and the European Union: 20 Years European Seniors' Union (ESU), University of Göttingen, 24.06.2016

<sup>20</sup> <http://esu-epp.eu/events/event-7/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://esu-epp.eu/events/event-3/>

<sup>22</sup> <http://esu-epp.eu/events/10th-esu-congress/>

# — Looking Ahead 6

## **The year 2020 was an unprecedented year.**

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to humanity and presented a disproportionate threat to the health, lives, rights and well-being of older persons. It concerned all and everyone. It has been a catalyst for the way society perceives the needs and human rights of the ageing population. We want the recovery of COVID-19 in Europe to be an opportunity to pave the way for a more inclusive, just and age-friendly society, based on democracy, the rule of law, and inalienable respect for human dignity. As we stated in our Resolution this year, we must recover and build the Europe we stand for together!

At the end of 2020, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, in her first State of the Union address, welcomed the agreement of the EU Council and the EU Parliament on the long-term EU budget for 2021-2027. In addition, with the 'Next Generation EU', the temporary recovery instrument created to fuel Europe's recovery from the coronavirus crisis, a package of a total of 1.8 trillion Euro will be available to help rebuild a post-COVID-19 Europe. The economic recovery from the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic is pinpointed as the biggest priority for the year ahead. The green and digital transformations are mentioned as the cornerstones of the EU recovery.

We welcome these accents: post-COVID-19 Europe must be greener, more digital, more resilient and more fit for current and forthcoming challenges. We need to underline also the need to focus on certain elements of

social policy to contribute to Europe's recovery. Economic and social recovery go hand-in-hand. Only by including the most vulnerable groups in recovery plans, and encouraging Member States to do the same, the EU will create a future where 'no one is left behind'.

At the end of 2020, the year in which the ESU planned to celebrate its 25th anniversary, we are grateful to those who have built the ESU. We thank you and all partners within the ESU network for your active commitment to the well-being of our fellow citizens and for your cooperation in our association.

We look forward to 2021 with hope and solidarity, emphasizing the rights of older people and the ambition to play an active role in society, as well as in policy-making. Let us share our experiences and good practices, let us make the voice of the senior citizens heard, and let us

ensure that the older persons' participation is experienced as a gift and an opportunity.

Several meetings in the year 2021 will provide opportunities to exchange experiences, deepen insights and, in consultation with leading experts, strengthen our commitment to an inclusive, democratic and resilient Europe.

In the first half of 2021, we will organize video conferences almost exclusively and debates on 'the future of Europe'. At the end of 2021, we hope to meet again in person to celebrate the history of the ESU and thank all senior citizens for their faith in the role of our association. And then we will be ready for the next EPP congress in the Netherlands on 'the Europe we want'. Together we are building an inclusive Europe for all generations.



# — Stay informed 7

## SOME DIGITAL INSTRUMENTS

 [www.esu-epp.eu](http://www.esu-epp.eu)

 [www.facebook.com/esu.eu](https://www.facebook.com/esu.eu)

 Flickr account

 [www.twitter.com/esu\\_epp](https://www.twitter.com/esu_epp)

Our website is one of the main sources to stay abreast of the latest events the ESU is organizing. Besides a selection of pictures, you can also find summaries of our conferences and other gatherings.

Social media is used to increase visibility and communications, not only with members, but also with people interested in the ESU. We therefore aim to continue to focus on this medium. And although social media is especially popular within the younger generations, we manage to reach our older audience via our Facebook page by focussing on topics that correspond with their interests.

# Annex 8

## 1. LETTER TO EU COMMISSION PRESIDENT URSULA VON DER LEYEN & VICE-PRESIDENT DUBRAVKA ŠUICA EXPRESSING ESU'S CONCERNS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:



Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen  
President  
European Commission

Mrs. Dubravka Šuica  
Vice-President  
European Commission

Copy to:  
Mr. Donald Tusk  
President, EPP

Brussels, 8 May 2020

Dear President von der Leyen,  
Dear Vice-President Šuica,

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has brought pain and sorrow to our societies, led to unprecedented challenges for health care systems and has had dramatic socio-economic impacts across Europe and in the whole world.

After the acute phase of the crisis, our societies will have to find the means to repair the social and economic damage, to regain trust in our institutions and to safeguard Europe's founding values of democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

In Europe, we can only recover together. No one country can respond by itself to all the problems, and even cooperation between Member States is not enough. We need the EU to play an effective and visible role in leading a common strategy, in implementing a contingency plan, in coping with the challenges at various levels and to give citizens the confident feeling that the EU as an institution, together with governments at all levels, as well as all stakeholders, are acting together to create effective solutions.

Dear President,  
Dear Vice-President,

As president of the European Seniors' Union (ESU), I would like to express in this letter some concerns of our members, active senior citizens from all over Europe, who are in permanent contact with their fellow-citizens. As we seek, through our Associations, to build bridges between the



European policy level and citizens, we have continued to keep in regular contact with them, especially in these difficult times. Let me highlight some concerns:

- 1 In every situation, especially in the acute phase of the COVID-19 crisis, human rights are valuable. Older persons' human rights must be protected without discrimination on an equal basis together with others. Advanced age should never by itself be a criterion for excluding persons from specialised care. Every person must have access to the health care and long-term care he/she needs. In the first phase of lifting containment measures, it is essential that the risks of relaxing the containment measures are taken into account. Vulnerable groups, such as older fragile persons with underlying health conditions (e.g. cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory or cancer diseases), need protection but again reference to age solely must not be used as a criterion to make decisions concerning the lifting or not lifting of these measures, or to keep 'people of a certain age' in longer isolation.
- 2 During the acute phase of the spread of the COVID-19 virus, older persons, who are often grandparents, persons deserving respect from all generations, have lived through a very difficult situation. In residential care homes in particular, residents, medical and caring personnel have experienced a dramatic change in circumstances. Social distancing rules have aggravated the risk of social isolation in care homes, as well as for persons living alone. 'How does our society respect older persons? How do we care for the older generations? How do we organise long-term care in our societies?' These were already important questions over several decades in our ageing societies, but they became burning questions during the period of the CORONA crisis. Even when we take into account the competences of governments at several levels, and have the greatest respect for subsidiarity, we cannot deny that we are all concerned. Governments, stakeholders and citizens alike. Our societies need health, social and long-term care systems which encourage individualised support for older persons, while promoting their full inclusion in the community.
- 3 We welcome the European Roadmap towards lifting the COVID-19 containment measures, a gradual, coordinated approach and the continuing attempts to reach common agreements between member states. We all feel that we need solidarity more than ever. Starting with respect for all generations (no ageism), and creating structural and informal ways to connect with each other.  
We hope that the recent dramatic experiences will elicit a broad reflection about our life-style, and especially for the protection of the most vulnerable persons in our society and how we care for vulnerable older persons. Long-term care is certainly one of the social and economic challenges across the EU. Therefore, we call for the integration of long-term care in the Social Scoreboard indicators, feeding into the preparation of the Country Reports in the context of the European Semester. It would complement the more qualitative assessment of the economic and social challenges across the EU, and it is thus one of the answers to the permanent challenges of demographic changes in our societies.
- 4 We need to boost initiatives for healthy ageing and life-long learning. Physical distancing should not lead to social isolation. Although the use of digital communication is very common in some countries, even for older generations, in other regions many older persons never learned it, and therefore miss out on an important instrument to communicate. In an inclusive society, cohesion between groups requires also that older persons have access to the available technology. Life-long learning, participation in the digital world of science and



culture and even social networking with children, grandchildren and friends, are all important gains of such learning processes. Access to the digital world: no generation should miss it.

Dear President,  
Dear Vice-President,

Citizens hope that we will overcome this crisis together, therefore we need Europe, acting in solidarity 'with one great heart', as was highlighted several times. Whatever measures are taken, they should be assessed from the perspective of people's well being. This is what citizens expect and deserve.

We thank you for your attention to this letter and we wish you abundant success in the realisation of the European Roadmap for Recovery. As the European Seniors' Union (ESU), we are ready to support your efforts and initiatives via our Associations throughout our societies.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Hermans', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Em. Prof. Dr. An Hermans

## II. ESU Resolution: Europe's Recovery. Building the future of fair and resilient societies – including all generations.

### A) Context

- On the 11th of March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the outbreak of the viral disease COVID-19 had reached the level of a global pandemic. This world-wide health crisis concerned all and everyone. It became a health crisis, an economic crisis and the actions taken to stop the spread of the virus changed our way of life and had an enormous impact on our societal life. People across Europe were suffering and had to cope with illness and death and many people feared for their own health and that of their loved ones. Moreover, the economic impact of the pandemic has cost people their jobs and livelihoods, and has started to impact people's well-being and mental health. At the same time, a remarkable growth of individual solidarity became apparent which gives hope for comparable challenges in the future.
- Managing the COVID-19 crisis in the first half of 2020 was predominantly shaped by distinct country-specific national approaches. Although several initiatives were taken at the European level, a common European guidance, a coordinated European approach to cope with the crisis was missing. In the media's headlines the common European voice was weak or missing. In vain citizens asked: "where are the European values of solidarity and respect for each person?"
- The COVID-19 crisis has exposed many vulnerabilities, some of which are linked to the profound demographic change already affecting our societies and communities across Europe. Although all age groups are at risk of contracting COVID-19, older persons faced a significant risk of developing severe illness if they contracted the disease due to their physical fragility and underlying health conditions (cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes...). Moreover, older persons living in long-term care facilities (LTCF) were at a higher risk of infection due to living together in close proximity to others. In many European regions their dramatic living and care conditions, the fragmented and chaotic management of the crisis, the suffering of residents and personnel caught the eye of public opinion and international and

European institutions, including: the United Nations (UN), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the WHO/Europe, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe (CoE)... Repeatedly, authors expressed their concerns about older persons in LTCF as 'often neglected, out of sight, being among the most vulnerable of all' in our society. On the other hand, it must be said also that in many cases previous mismanagement over years and even decades, together with the failure of effective reforms, became obvious and evident in the crisis and should be mentioned as additional causes for the enormous problems that national and regional health systems were and are facing.

### B) Building fairer and more resilient societies for all generations

- Now that confinement measures are lifted, European institutions and societies in all member states should work together to implement the lessons learned during COVID-19. This is a historic opportunity for reflection and rebuilding more fair, resilient and inclusive societies for all generations. We need to recover together and provide a common resilient response to the immense economic, social and societal challenges. Member States acting on their own is not enough. The EU must play an effective and visible role in leading the Common Strategy, addressing challenges in different areas and giving citizens the confidence that the EU, the national and regional governments and the stakeholders at all levels are working together to develop solutions by, among other measures, reaching a final agreement on the EU's long-term budget (€1,100 billion for 2021-2027), and a temporary reinforcement (€750 billion) for the 'Next Generation EU' initiatives.
- We welcome the announcement of a 'Green book' on demographic change, linked to the Report on the Impact of Demographic Change (2020). Mrs. Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, stated: "Addressing demographic change is key to building a fairer and more resilient society." The EPP wants to be part of the recovery perspective. Referring to the 'Statement on European solidarity and the protection of

fundamental rights in the COVID-19 pandemic' (European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies, 2nd April 2020), we must face this situation with strength, care and solidarity – a social vaccine that accompanies our search for a COVID-19 vaccine, which has an enduring character. One that provides resilience, lasting social and economic solidarity and lasting immunity against indifference.

### **C) Ensuring that older persons' rights are respected**

- In every situation, also in the acute phase of the COVID-19 crisis, human rights are valuable and essential. All policy must invariably be based on the equal worth of all human beings, rooted in a common human dignity. Older persons' human rights must be protected on an equal basis with others, without discrimination. Advanced age should never by itself be a criterion for excluding persons from specialised care. Every person must have access to the health care and long-time care he/she needs. Difficult health-care decisions affecting older people must be guided by a commitment to dignity and the right to health.
- In the phase of lifting containment measures it is essential that the risks of the relaxation of containment measures are taken into account. Vulnerable groups, such as older fragile persons, persons with underlying health conditions (for example cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory and cancer diseases...), need protection, but again a reference to age solely can't be a criterion to make decisions concerning the lifting/not lifting of these measures, or to keep 'people of a certain age' in longer isolation.
- The coronavirus has deepened prejudice against older persons. Over the last months, older persons have been increasingly stereotyped and stigmatized as frail, dependent, as a burden on society, as if all older persons experienced the same symptoms and the same risks of death by sole virtue of their age. Hate speech and ageist comments gained visibility in the media. Isolation and lock-down have worsened the picture of elderly abuse and discrimination. Violence against older persons is increasing. Fighting discrimination and abuse of older persons involves fighting ageism as a structural factor of

stereotyping.

- During the acute phase of the spread of the COVID-19 virus and the lock-down, older persons, often grandparents, persons deserving respect from all generations, lived in a very difficult situation. Especially in residential care homes, residents as well as medical and caring personnel went through dramatic circumstances. Physical distancing rules aggravated the risk of social isolation in care homes, as well for persons living alone. Adapted social support and smart efforts to reach older persons could – and can – help older persons to maintain the feeling of 'being part of a community'.

### **D) Health and social care for older persons**

- Europe's healthcare and long-term care systems have been at the forefront throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past few months, it became clearer than ever that the EU and member states must work together to deliver a coordinated, effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated and exposed the vulnerability of our healthcare systems in the member states and our societies. It is time to improve the Europe-wide coordination and to support the member states to strengthen their systems in the field of public health, especially in emergency situations. In recent months, several initiatives have been undertaken, including the EU4Health programme, the common development of a vaccine, the mobilisation of resources through international pledging and by joining forces with countries and global health organisations to promote universal testing, treatment and vaccination. To master future challenges like the COVID-19 crisis, it is necessary to ensure that all ordinary medical institutions (hospitals, outpatient poly-clinics etc.) would be able to provide a fully-functioning spectrum of usual, regular and adequate medical services for all patients, especially the older ones, as soon as possible.
- Health and caring personnel in the health, and in particular the long-time care sector, need better work conditions. They were 'our heroes' during the pandemic. The main challenge is meeting a growing demand for sufficient, accessible, good quality and affordable health and long-term care services as enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights. Ensuring a high level of human health and care protection requires the right infrastructure, such

as hospitals, long-term care homes and housing adapted and equipped for older people.

- Our societies need health, social and long-term care systems which provide individualised support to older persons, while promoting their full inclusion in the community. How do we make this happen? This was already an important question over several decades in our ageing societies, and it became a burning question during the period of the Corona crisis. Even when we take into account the competences of governments at several levels, and have the greatest respect for subsidiarity, we can't deny that we are all concerned. Governments, stakeholders and citizens. Long-time care is one of the crucial social and economic challenges of demographic change across the EU. In Europe, we can learn from each other about how to organize these facilities, respecting older persons' rights and meeting their needs.
- Therefore, we call for the integration of long-term care in the Social Scoreboard indicators, feeding into the preparation of the Country Reports in the context of the European Semester. It complements the more qualitative assessment of economic and social challenges across the EU, and it is thus one of the answers to the permanent challenges of demographic changes in our societies.

#### **E) Recovering together, realizing solidarity**

- In this difficult time, we call to uphold solidarity that is inclusive to everyone and in particular to those who are hit hardest. We hope that the recent dramatic experiences will elicit a broad reflection on our life-style, and in particular on the protection of the most vulnerable persons in our society and how we care for vulnerable older persons. All social, economic and humanitarian responses must take the needs of older persons fully into account, from health care to social protection and a decent income. As most older persons are women, who are more at risk of entering into poverty in this period of life, they need especially our solidarity.
- As solidarity is not a one-way street the ESU, as a strong representation of the elder population of our continent, wishes to show solidarity with the younger generations in Europe by supporting

the EU's Green Deal and by fighting together for the restoration of our climate and environment.

- We need to boost initiatives for healthy ageing and life-long learning, including digital skills, in all age groups. Whilst in some countries the use of digital communication is very common, also among older generations, in other regions many older persons have never learned it. They are missing an important instrument to communicate. In an inclusive society, cohesion between groups requires that older persons also have access to available technology. Life-long learning, participation in the digital world of science and culture and social networking with children, grandchildren and friends are important gains of such learning processes. Access to the digital world: no generation can miss it.

Therefore older generations need continuous support to reach the necessary capacities to participate in the digital world. Meanwhile all institutions in Europa, governmental or private, are strongly requested to communicate and motivate them via the classical form (printed, papers, TV, radio) as a first step to integrate all those who have no online facilities.

- Rural depopulation, combined with an ageing population, will require ambitious investments to attract the youth, create jobs and make rural areas vibrant while also developing adapted services for all generations. In some EU ageing regions, especially if rural, remote or mountainous, there is a lack of long-term care services. We welcome the promotion of the Silver Economy, a sector that can contribute to increase the quality of life of older persons by providing innovative services, including utilising digitalisation. For that purpose the Silver Economy must respect the needs of seniors and offer them relevant goods and services which respond to and fulfil their aspirations and needs.
- Most older persons who are not suffering from illness and fragility are not dependent and powerless. They are and want to be part

of all areas of society. They are fully integrated in family life, work, volunteering, and play an important role in caring for others, teaching and learning. They want to offer their life experiences, their cultural and social heritage to the younger generation and are prepared to look to the future together to build a sustainable future in intergenerational solidarity. They hope their voices count.

- While the pandemic highlighted challenges for health and care systems, with the situation of care homes in the spotlight, the crisis also highlights the power and importance of solidarity, society and mutual support in neighbourhoods and local communities, as people cared for each other, providing both practical and psychological support to reduce anxiety, isolation and loneliness. Furthermore, the COVID-19 crisis emphasizes the role of the traditional family, because seniors in family relationships have overcome the crisis much better than those seniors not having contact with their family or living alone. This also reinforces the importance of psychological support, not only of material help.
- As a consequence of the crisis, the EPP supports massively the view that henceforth the EU should give political priority to providing prevention, care and health education (“life-time healthy ageing”) for all generations, in order to make our health systems as strong as possible. This includes the most efficient international cooperation, especially in enhancing the exchange of health information between the EU member states’ institutions.
- The EPP urges seizing on this pandemic as a call to foster solidarity and promote resilient societies, where no one is left behind. Let’s foster our European values by protecting and promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

And finally: All generations count the same and must be heard in the upcoming process of European recovery. In Europe, we can only recover together by aiming to build a future of fair and resilient societies.

Brussels, 7 August 2020



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