

2021

ANNUAL REPORT

A long and intensive search for a post-pandemic lifestyle



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2021 was a strange year

It began promisingly, as it seemed that we could almost put the pandemic behind us and look forward to a new 'post-pandemic' phase. As we wrote in our January ESU-Newsletter: *"2021 will be a year of recovery, hope and confidence. We look forward to 2021 with hope, emphasizing the rights of older people and the ambition to play an active role in society."*

Although this year was still very much a trial of what can and cannot be done given the COVID-19 measures, we made the most of it. As ESU, we kept in touch with our delegates, organized some interesting video conferences and worked together on a position paper on the inclusion of older people in the digital age and the need for media and information literacy, as the key to dignified digital connectivity, participation and democracy. And through it all, we longed for personal encounters... Already in local and regional associations we saw seniors enjoying face-to-face meetings again. We organized a live- stream Summer Academy open to all and everyone interested. But we had to wait until September in Madrid for our 25-year celebration to see each other again physically, share thoughts and hopes, and be grateful that we could meet each other again.

Looking back at 2021, we see several very important meetings, which were initially prepared to be live events, but unfortunately they had to be postponed or converted into online events. This was also the case for big events, like for example the EPP Congress in Rotterdam, or the German Seniors' Day in Hamburg, both scheduled for November 2021.

We cannot express enough our hope that our world may be freed from the COVID-19 virus that is dominating social and political agendas. What does the future of our societies look like and what role is left for active seniors? We hope that everyone who is associated with the ESU is an ambassador for the rights of senior citizens in this fast-developing society.

We wish you much reading pleasure and hope you find inspiration and motivation for future initiatives in your home country and within your association.

Guido Dumon
Secretary general

An Hermans
President

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IN MEMORIAM

It is with regret that we inform our members and friends that Mr. Josep-Maria Regàs i Graupera, passed away on 9th May 2021, at 80 years of age. We expressed our condolences to his wife, Maria-Teresa Gauñabens i Rodon and family. Mr Regàs has been a member of the ESU Executive Committee for the Association 'Unio de la Gent Gran' and participated very regularly in our ESU meetings.

We will remember Mr. Regas and miss him in our Association. We will keep him, and all our colleagues and friends who passed away, in our thoughts and prayers.

MEMBERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION

ESU Associations

Since its creation in 1995, the ESU has been the recognised 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 and Res Publica
Finland	Kansallinen Senioriliitto ry
Germany	Senioren-Union der CDU Deutschlands Senioren-Union der CSU
Greece	Seniors of Nea Demokratia
Italy	SVP-Seniorenbewegung
Latvia	Latvian Christian Seniors Union
Lithuania	HU-LCD Senior Citizens Club
Luxembourg	CSV-Senioren
Malta	Assoċjazzjoni Penjsonanti Anzjani Nazzjonalisti
The Netherlands	CDA Senioren
Norway	Senior Høyres Landsforbund
Poland	Polska Unia Seniorów (PUS) Parlamentarzystów Ruchu Ludowego
Slovakia	Združenie kresťanských seniorov Slovenska
Slovenia	Klub seniorjev in seniork pri SDS Zveza seniorjev Nova Slovenija Zveza upokojencev pri SLS
Spain	Comision 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
Ukraine	Ukrainian Association of Retired Persons
Europe	Europäische Zentrum für Arbeitnehmerfragen

ESU representation

As a member Association of the EPP, we are closely linked to the EPP activities and the EPP family. We participate with voting rights in the Political Assembly and in the Working Groups. Very important in 2021 was Working Group 1, preparing the document 'The Europe we want to build' for the EPP Congress. Mr. Heinz Becker, ESU vice president and former MEP, represented the ESU in this working group.

The representation in AGE Platform Europe is also important to the ESU. AGE, Mrs. Ghislaine Van Halewyn, (Aînés du CDU, BE) represents the ESU in AGE Platform Europe.

25 years of ESU – A triptych in Madrid

Seniors focusing on EU's political priorities

The ESU was finally able to celebrate its 25th anniversary after a one-year delay. For this purpose we met in Madrid, the venue was well chosen because it was also in Madrid that the organization was founded in 1995. It was a warm gathering with our 'Christian democratic family' after being separated for so long by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our congress theme and message was loud and clear: "Building the future together". Read the full report of the congress on our website. In this report, we highlight some aspects of the Congress programme: the reflection and discussions on the future of the EU, "A quarter of a century of active senior citizenship" and we held a roundtable discussion. It was moderated by ESU vice-president Heinz Becker. We welcomed speakers from different backgrounds: health, digitalization & climate change:

- **Marina Troncoso Rodríguez:** President of CAUMAS (Confederation of Associations of University Programs for the Elderly);
- **Juan Manuel Martínez Gómez:** Geriatrician, president of CEOMA (Spanish Confederation of Seniors' Organizations);
- **Patrick Penninckx:** Council of Europe, Head of Information Society Department;
- **Carlo Giacomo Angrisano:** Former chairman EDS. Secretary general of "Nuevas Generaciones del Partido Popular".

ESU 25th Anniversary



The celebration of the 25th anniversary of ESU

The ESU Congress in Madrid was a celebration that served to sharpen our focus on the future. In 1995, the first ESU-Congress took place in Madrid. ESU vice-president Carmen Quintanilla was proud to welcome the participants again in the Spanish capital after a quarter of a century of tumultuous European developments and intensive seniors' involvement in political decision-making.

We had the honour of welcoming some high-level speakers from the socio-political world. ESU Vice President Carmen Quintanilla was proud to host them:

- **Mr. Pablo Casado**, President of the Partido Popular;
- **Mr. Borja Fanjul**, City Councillor of Madrid speaking for José Luis Martínez Almeida, Mayor of Madrid;
- **Mr. Wilhelm Hofmeister**, Director, Konrad Adenauer Foundation for Spain and Portugal;
- **Mr. Antonio López-Istúriz**, MEP and Secretary-General of the EPP.

We were happy that we could offer the audience some testimonies of leading persons from 'the first years' of the ESU: Elisabeth Dispaux-Cornil, Bernhard Worms and Leif Hallberg shared their stories about the ESU history via video messages. These were part of the 25th anniversary celebrations at the Madrid Congress. In addition to these testimonials, we also received many wishes, either online or in person – please read the report of the proceedings on our website.



Extraordinary Congress

The celebration of the 25th anniversary of the ESU in Madrid was coupled with an Extraordinary Congress. It took place on 24th September in the afternoon. Our president, An Hermans, opened the afternoon session with hopeful words for a future-oriented ESU: "Standing together and looking in the same direction, we can build a strong, resilient and sustainable future: without discrimination, without ageism and in solidarity."

We started with the amendments to the ESU Statutes and Rules of Procedure. The presentation of the proposed changes to the ESU Executive Committee, questions from the delegates and the final vote on the changes, all this was prepared and moderated by our Secretary General Guido Dumon. One of the changes affecting the functioning of the ESU is the shift in the timing of the election of the Presidency (from 3 to 5 years).

Read more about the Extraordinary Congress on our website.

THE PRESIDENCY AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Presidency composition

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

President

An Hermans (BE)

Vice-Presidents

Nikolay Andreev (BG)

Heinz K. Becker (AT)

Antonios Demetriades (CY)

Manfred Hopfengärtner (GE)

Jozé Jurkovic (SL)

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)

Secretary General

Guido Dumon (BE)

Treasurer

Etienne Vanderroost (BE)

Honorary Presidents

Leif Hallberg (SE)

Maria Kanellopoulou (GR)

Elisabeth Dispaux (BE)

Former President

Bernhard Worms (DE)



Overview of Presidency meetings in 2021

16/02/2021 – Online

- Agenda of the meeting
- Report of the last meeting
- Financial documents
- Conferences 2021
- Summer Academy proposal 2021

02/07/2021 – Online

- Adoption of the minutes
- Report of the President and the general secretariat
- ESU finances (Etienne Vanderroost)
- Extraordinary congress and celebration 25 years of ESU
 - Program of Madrid
 - Amendment of the ESU statutes: proposal to the EXCO
- Procedure for a Resolution *“For an active and competent participation of all in a digital society. The need for media and information literacy.”*

The Executive Committee

23/03/2021 – Online

- Minutes of the EXCO meeting of 4 July 2020
- Draft budget 2021
- Annual report 2020

03/07/2021 – Online

- ESU finances
- Country Reports
- Extraordinary congress and celebration of 25 years of the ESU

23/08/2021 – Online

- Amendments on the resolution *“For an active and competent participation of all in resilient digital societies: The need for media and information literacy for all age groups”* (Heinz K. Becker)

Demographic Change: one of the deepest-lying challenges for European societies

When Ursula von der Leyen took office as President of the European Commission on 1 December 2019, the EU Commission presented six priorities to pursue:

1. a European Green Deal;
2. a Europe fit for the digital age;
3. an economy that works for people;
4. a stronger Europe in the world;
5. promoting the European way of life;
6. a new push for European democracy.

The sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU's emergency response and the planning of a coordinated EU Recovery, however, overshadowed all other political objectives in 2020 and 2021. Nevertheless, the initial priorities of the new Commission, aiming to frame the EU political perspectives, remained as benchmarks for political action. Inevitably, the crisis has had some influence on the realization of the EU Commissions' priorities, but the topics weren't changed and... finally only a seventh priority was added to the existing list, namely: action to contain the coronavirus crisis and promote recovery from it.

A structured Recovery Plan must lead Europe out of the crisis into sustainable, long-term economic growth, based on a green transition and a digital transformation. (The comprehensive package for European recovery, with its overall budget of €1.85 trillion. Major initiatives like the 'Next Generation EU' boost the EU budget in the first crucial years of the recovery and contribute, together with the reinforced budget for 2021-2027, to making it sustainable, inclusive, and fair.)

We welcome the fact that in mid-2021 the Conference on the Future of Europe will finally get up and running, with the aim of improving the functioning of democracy, transparency and participation in policy-making. The conferences and a digital platform are open to all European citizens and invite them to participate in a common reflection on the future of Europe.

As ESU, we were glad to welcome several EU Council decisions and EU Commission initiatives showing that together with the Member States, the regions and all stakeholders, the EU made a resolute choice to integrate ageing policies as a mainstream in all policy areas. We saw it as a response to our long-standing call for an 'age-friendly society'. An important signal was given with the nomination of an EU Vice-president, Dubravka Šuica, in charge of 'Demography and Democracy' and 'to work with all Commissioners to ensure that our tools and policies take account of the implications and impact of demographic change'. Our President elaborated on this during the congress in Madrid. Please see her introductory text on our website.

And there is a lot of work to be done. Governments at all levels have a shared interest in responding to the impact of demographic change for the benefit of all generations. The way forward depends on several strategic questions, including: how to stimulate innovation and productivity? How to bring more people into employment? How to modernize healthcare systems, social protection, and social services and how to address regional disparities? We also must look closely at people's social well-being and how they cope with problems like loneliness, social isolation, mental health, economic resilience, and long-term healthcare...



Towards an integrated European Care Strategy

On 15 September 2021, in her 'State of the Union' address to the European Parliament, European Commission president, Ursula Von der Leyen, announced the launch of a European Care Strategy. With this initiative, the president promised a European policy initiative on long-term care that had been announced previously. It is also part of the commitments to the Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

This is an important initiative. The European Union does not have the main competence in the field of care. This remains mainly at the Member State level. What can be a more active EU role in care? How can the EU play its role in this field? Does the EU have the power to guide, influence and support countries to create sustainable care systems for all its citizens?

The initiative has just started. After a decade of actions on "Active and healthy ageing" and initiatives to promote and empower all generations, the Commission announced a new step. We are glad to welcome it, and hope that we will have the chance to work together with several partners to co-operate for the best result. In the first place with the EPP, as we asked several years ago for an integrated strategy and recently also the EPP group in the EP called for it. See their EPP Group Position Paper on a European Union for Health.



Seniors in the digital era

The ESU attention towards digitalization can be seen as one of the results of the recent COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, connectivity to the internet was more important than ever before. The use of the internet is needed not only in a professional context, but 'all and everyone' is supposed to be able to use the internet and to be integrated in the digital era.

If we do not provide technology access, digital literacy and training to older persons, then the risks of social exclusion and loneliness will increase. Older persons have the right to participate in all areas of society. Digital integration is a crucial condition for connectivity and to participate and contribute to society.

The ESU wants to defend the rights of senior citizens online and offline, preserving their possibilities to communicate, to express themselves freely and offering them all the opportunities needed to understand and participate fully in the digital era.

The ESU welcomes recent policy plans from the EU (The EU 2030 Digital Compass¹), governments at several levels, public and private stakeholders and civil society, responding to the need for strategic and operational actions to build inclusive digital societies.

The ESU calls for universal access to the internet for everyone and appropriate digital learning facilities for all, to communicate and to use information and media content wisely; to know one's rights online; understanding how to combat online hate speech and misinformation...

Media and Information Literacy are the first steps to participate in digital societies, are the building blocs to digital active citizenship. The ESU is urging governments, all stakeholders and civil society itself, to create a diversity of initiatives, not only to be developed for seniors and with seniors, but for all generations (see ESU Statement² and ESU Resolution³).

¹The EU digital Compass



²The ESU Statement



³The ESU Resolution



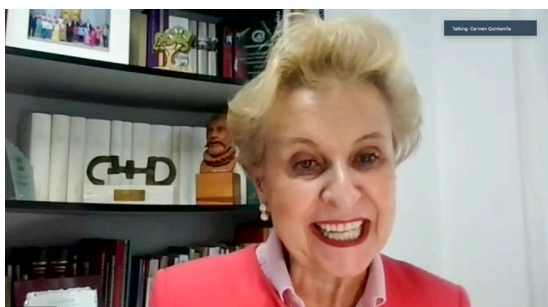
VIDEO-CONFERENCES ARE FRAMING THE ESU VISION AND ACTION



19/01/2021 Video Conference with Herman Van Rompuy: Drawing lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, to cope with future challenges for people and for the EU

On 19 January 2021, the European Seniors' Union (ESU) organized its first video conference of the new year. It was an honour that President Emeritus of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, first full-time president of the EU Council (2009-2014), was willing to participate as our keynote speaker concerning: 'Drawing lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, to cope with future challenges for people, for the EU'. As the German temporary Presidency of the EU just came to an end, two speakers complemented Mr. Van Rompuy's speech: Dr. Hardy Ostry, director of the Europe office of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) in Brussels and Mr. Rolf Berend, former Member of the European Parliament (1990-2009), President of the Senioren-Union of the CDU in Thüringen and member of the Executive Committee of the ESU.

For more information about the video-conference, the speech of President Emeritus Herman Van Rompuy, the reflections on the Presidency of Germany of the Council ... check out our ESU website ►



16/02/2021 Video Conference with Dubravka Šuica: COVID-19 response & launch of 'The Green Paper on Ageing'

In mid-February we were honoured to welcome Mrs Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Democracy and Demography to our video conference. Although the gathering was planned before the launch of 'The Green Paper on Ageing' on the 27th January 2021, this was an interesting windfall.

Vice-President Šuica did highlight some of the Commission's initiatives, with an emphasis on her own achievements. Information about the Commissions' COVID-19 response: "We have designed a European gateway to enable interoperability of COVID-19 tracing apps across Europe. We proposed an ambitious, forward-looking EU4 Health programme. And we are building the first steps towards a European health union."

For more information on the event and the speech of Mrs Dubravka Šuica, check out our ESU website ►



23/03/2021 Video Conference with Patrick Penninckx: The era of digitalization

Patrick Penninckx, Head of the Information Society Department at the Council of Europe informed us about what the "The era of digitalization" means for seniors, focusing on communication highways to disinformation and infodemic. Mr. Penninckx introduced us to the opportunities and potential risks from digitalization. Two experienced policymakers reacted to Penninckx' keynote speech and added some new thoughts and initiatives:

Sophie Michaelides, Communication Expert – PR, Media and Marketing Strategist in Cyprus. And Ivo Belet, Deputy Head of Cabinet to Vice President of the European Commission in charge of Democracy and Demography, Dubravka Šuica.

For more information on the event, check out our ESU website ►





20/04/2021 Video Conference with Stella Kyriakides: A European Health Union in the making?

This meeting was in line with the position paper presented by the EPP group on 1 July 2020. We could count two very interesting speakers. Mrs Stella Kyriakides, EU commissioner for Cyprus since 1 December 2019. She is responsible for 'Health and Food Safety' in the European Commission. "From now on, public health is a top priority for the EU" she stressed. To this end, she worked in line with the Green Paper on ageing, where long term care, mental care and loneliness are central, so that EU citizens can grow old in good health. There was a clear link with the work of Commissioner Suica Dubravka, this is important for seniors, we need to know what the horizon is.

Mr. Siegfried Muresan was our second speaker, he is an expert on 'European Recovery policies'. He is vice-president of the Committee on Budgets, he has been following and influencing the priorities, the choices and the road maps for the multi-annual budget and, of course, he is also aware of the needs and opportunities of the Member States.

For more information on the event, check out our ESU website ►



2-3/07/2021 Live ESU Summer Academy: New seniors, moving into a new economic and digital world

After a break during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 we had an evaluation and reflection about the ten past editions. ÖSB and ESU decided to 'renew' the format of the Summer Academy by organizing this years' digital event on 2-3 July. This time the Summer Academy was not just for delegates from the ÖSB and ESU, but was streamed live and thereby accessible to a wider public.



Over the years, older generations have developed a new 'self-awareness'. After ending their professional life, seniors explore a new phase of life with energy and creativity. The EU, more than ever, acknowledges the need for a comprehensive strategy on demographic change. In the EU-Commission a vice-president, Mrs. Dubravka Šuica, has been designated as responsible for the development of political actions regarding age and ageing and taking into account the differences between Member States and regions. In this political context, the 2021 Summer Academy offered a unique opportunity to look ahead. We developed a program, aiming at:

- Presenting most recent information about EU policies relating to the EU challenges for the future and to age and ageing;
- Exchanging experiences and views on the well-being of seniors;
- Voicing the ambitions, needs and hopes of seniors for the future of the societies we are living in;
- Expressing seniors' views on the Future of Europe by participating in the digital platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

For more information on the event, check out our ESU website ►



BUILDING AND MAINTAINING BRIDGES

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING BRIDGES WITH OUR MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS:

12/02/2021 Video speech by our president for CDA's event 'The good life'

Our colleagues from the Netherlands, CDA-Senioren, organised on 12 February a webinar with 600 participants, about 'The good life' in preparation of the coming national parliamentary elections. President An Hermans explained how the ESU voices the needs and aspirations of seniors at the European level.

19/02/2021 EPP Podcast with An Hermans

Our president was invited for a Podcast with Sara Pini from the EPP - European People's Party. 10 interesting questions were asked about the ESU and our operation.

29/04/2021 European Day of Solidarity between Generations

In the scope of this day, our president An Hermans, together with MEP and president of YEPP Lúcia Pereira and EDS president Carlo Angrisano were invited for an intergenerational interview in the framework of the 'EPP Family Talks' series.

21/06/2021 Tech a Look - EP. 4 with An Hermans

President An Hermans was welcomed in the EPP series 'Tech a look' dedicated to digital policy. Eline Chivot and President Hermans discussed how Artificial Intelligence can help seniors in the challenges that they face in their everyday life.

27/08/2021 20th anniversary of Sdružení křesťanských seniorů

Our president conveyed her wishes to the organisation through a written letter that appeared in the SKS booklet, published at the occasion of the 20th anniversary: Sdružení křesťanských seniorů, 2001-2021.

30/08/2021 Bundesdelegiertentagung der Senioren-Union in Magdeburg

President An Hermans sent best wishes to Prof Dr Wulff, president of the Senioren-Union. She expressed also her appreciation and thankfulness for the important role that Chancellor Angela Merkel has played in Germany and in Europe.

01/10/2021 1st October: United Nations International Day of Older Persons (UNIDOP): 'Digital Equity for All Ages'

Since 1990, the UN has designated 1st October as a day to remember the older generation. Read our president's message on the occasion of this festive day on our website.

10/10/2021 50th anniversary of Kansallinen senioriliitto ry (Fi)

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of our Finnish Member-Association: Kansallinen senioriliitto ry, our President An Hermans made a video message which can be found on our website.

13-15/10/2021 Strengthening contacts in Cyprus

Our ESU Vice-President Antonios Demetriades, who is also the President of the Senior Citizens' Organization of Cyprus (OSCC), invited ESU President An Hermans and Secretary-General Guido Dumon to participate in an event to mark the UNIDOP and to make some contacts with leading persons in politics to discuss policy issues related to older people. It was about: long-term care, fighting poverty and loneliness, cooperation between generations, digitalization... These various contacts will certainly serve to further cooperation in the future, for example with the Technical University of Limassol. For more information on the event, check out our website.

18/10/2021 Renewal of the Presidency of the Aînés du cdH

The ESU presidency was invited to Champion where the event took place. Thanks to Mr. Scharff for his dedicated services as former President of Aînés du cdH. We are pleased to welcome Mr. Bosly to our Executive Committee.

INFORMATION SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The growing importance of digital literacy has become more tangible than ever in 2021. With our small core team, we have therefore done everything possible to keep our organization together by informing it of what is happening in front of and behind the (computer) screens. This not only concerns the workings of our organization, but also what is going on in the international arena.

We are active on Facebook where we frequently inform our followers about our events, those of our partner associations and European news. We also provide a newsletter with space for personal stories and information about our planning.



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