



ANNUAL REPORT 2016



FOREWORD

'The storm and Europe: an inseparable couple', that was the title of the keynote speech of former President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy at the 9th ESU Congress in Leuven (4-5 November). He was speaking to an attentive audience of around 180 men and women, delegates of ESU member associations all over Europe. We recognized the ideas of Mr. Van Rompuy, highlighting the Europe we inherited from our political fathers, the strong and also the stormy periods and... the challenges for tomorrow.

We know that also today it is worth fighting for Europe and that a return to nationalism and economic protectionism brings no solution for today's multiple crises. Only with a united Europe, we will master the challenges of the future.

As ESU, we clearly stand on the European side. As a member association of the EPP, as a network of civil society associations, voicing the rights and duties, the needs and hopes of senior citizens, we call for 'a better Europe' near to citizens. Today, many European citizens feel far away from Europe and its institutions. Nevertheless, they feel affected by decisions taken at the European level. It is clear that between politicians and citizens better communication, more transparency is needed. Active citizens want to be involved in the development of Europe, want to be part of the continuous fight for democracy, freedom, and solidarity in our societies.

In this report we highlight some ESU activities of the year 2016. Most of the attention this year went of course to our statutory congress. Nevertheless, there were several other conferences and events we would like to elaborate on this annual overview.

We thank everyone who collaborated with us in the past year and hope to continue this cooperation in the future.

We wish you a pleasant reading.

Guido Dumon
Secretary General

An Hermans
President ESU

1. The ESU bodies

According to the statutes, the ESU has three statutory bodies: (1) the Congress, (2) the Executive Committee (General Assembly) and (3) the Presidium (Board).

1.1. The Congress

Every three years the ESU organises its Congress. On 4-5 November 2016, delegates from 30 seniors' associations from 23 European countries gathered in Leuven for its 9th triennial ESU Congress.

As a theme for 9th Congress, the ESU chose: 'For a safe and social Europe'. The ESU expects Europe to be a 'safe home' and that peace, prosperity and democracy in Europe may be preserved and reinforced by economic growth and social protection. Of course, only a few topics related to these expectations could be covered:

The necessity to regain the trust of the citizens;
The justified expectation that Europe promotes economic growth and social protection and stimulates an inclusive society, in which older persons are fully valued as well;
Managing the refugee and migration crisis and guaranteeing security and safety for all citizens.

Several inspiring speeches around this theme were held, among others by former European Council President Herman Van Rompuy about 'The storm and Europe: an inseparable couple'. In his speech about the challenges for Europe (the economy, migration and the European future itself), he explained that "we shouldn't reorient or reinvent Europe, but we have to give it more impetus and dynamism — and more ambition too. More hope. We owe it to our citizens, those of today and those of tomorrow."

In addition, greetings were given by Joseph Daul (President EPP), Koen Geens (Belgian Minister of Justice), Wouter Beke (President CD&V) and Chris Taes (Chair of the Provincial Council of Vlaams-Brabant). Sus Bergmans (Interreg Vlaanderen-Nederland) and Marleen Van Hees (director "Care" of Landelijke Thuiszorg) presented regional projects of 'European support to build inclusive societies'. Apart from the speech of Herman Van Rompuy on Saturday, a panel discussion with Heinz K. Becker (MEP), Benoit Drèze (member of the Walloon Parliament), Lidmila Nemcova (Sdružení křesťanských senior) and Astrid Nøklebye Heiberg, (Høyre - Senior Policies) was moderated by prof. dr. Steven Van Hecke.

President Daul stated in his video greetings for instance that the respect for each person is at the centre of all EPP policies: "personalism, a core value of Christian-Democracy. This implies the fight against any form of discrimination and in favour of an inclusive and

protective society, open to all age groups and guaranteeing to every citizen a decent quality of life. But it also means further involving citizens, including seniors, in the decision-making process."

Belgian Minister of Justice Koen Geens referred to the dangers of returning to nationalism and emphasised among others the need of cooperation on a European level between safety authorities.

As the EU is facing looming challenges: the promotion and implementation of reform programs to guarantee economic growth and employment, social protection and security, the further development of the Economic and Monetary Union, the completion of the Internal Market, transparency and democratic political policy-making,... President Hermans pointed out that "in all these fields our political decision makers, at the European level and also in the Member States, have an enormous responsibility. But not only Heads of State and Governments, are involved, also citizens, civil society, economic and social stakeholders have a role to play in the choices we make for the development of Europe." Also Chris Taes mentioned that "Europe should encourage and develop an active partnership with civil society. Only then is Europe certain to gain stronger public and democratic support. It is a question of vision and daring."

During the panel discussion, Heinz K. Becker argued for a plan to reduce the migration causes. Astrid Nøklebye Heiberg said that as the population ages, there is more time and there are more chances for participation in society. Lidmila Nemcova talked about the low pensions on her country, the Czech Republic and called on more cooperation between the former communist countries. Benoit Drèze, concluded that the employment rate of older workers has increased, while poverty and social exclusion have remained.

During the Congress, ESU President An Hermans was re-elected, a new Presidium was chosen, Secretary General Guido Dumon and Treasurer Etienne Vanderroost were appointed, and the Leuven Declaration, highlighting the main concerns of seniors all over Europe, was adopted. With this Declaration, the participants at the 9th Congress in Leuven showed that they are convinced and aware of the importance of Europe for peace and freedom, for security and wellbeing, and for the fulfilment of all citizens. Also in the future, by means of cooperation and active political participation, they will keep conveying and defending the European values.

DECLARATION OF THE EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION

ESU Congress 4-5 November 2016, Leuven

Since the foundation of the European Seniors' Union (ESU) in Madrid in 1995, the ESU has been a growing network of associations, which give voice to the seniors in Europe. Our values and goals are based on the European personalism, rooted in a Jewish Christian and humanist tradition, and they correspond with the vision on humanity and society of the European People's Party (EPP). At the celebration of its 20th anniversary, the ESU reaffirmed its adherence to this basic vision and its determination to continue the road towards a value driven Europe.

In its previous Congress, Together towards an age-friendly society (2013), the ESU stressed that we are on the way to an age-friendly society, where there is no place for discrimination, nor isolation, and where citizens can expect social protection. The ESU called on the EU, member states and regions, to involve seniors in policy decisions, to recognize the different impacts of demographic change, and to create the conditions for active and healthy ageing and to allow every person to participate in society.

At the ESU Statutory Congress in Leuven in 2016, we represent the interests of the older generations and give voice to our vision on Europe. Today, the ESU reaffirms its choices, as expressed in its past declarations and, in the context of today's society, the ESU highlights the following.

1. The European Seniors' Union (ESU) cares about the future of Europe, and in particular about the well-being of present and future generations who will uphold the values that brought and will continue to bring peace and prosperity in Europe. They count on it that decision makers at all levels and in particular in the European People's Party (EPP) will do everything possible, with effective and transparent European policy, to increase the trust that citizens have in the EU.

2. The ESU calls on the European Commission, the Parliament, the Member States and the European People's Party (EPP) to continue to implement the Europe 2020 Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, and in particular the concept of the Social Market Economy to respond to the needs and opportunities arising from the demographic changes. All citizens must have the encouraging experience that Europe is a safe place to live and work in and that Europe protects them. The further development of the 'Silver Economy' has to make full use of the opportunities of an increased life expectancy.

3. The ESU wants to draw attention to the problems of millions of Europeans who are on the side-lines, both from the labour market and from social integration. With more than 120 million people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, it is crucial that the EU, governments at all levels and stakeholders continue their efforts to guarantee all citizens a dignified life. The ESU calls to develop initiatives in the areas of anti-ageism, social inclusion, health care and pensions. The ESU underlines that civil society organizations and citizens are ready to offer their experiences, and play a crucial role in the optimization of an inclusive society for all ages.

4. The ESU urges all decision-makers and responsible citizens to work together to find sustainable solutions to the urgent problems of the refugees in order to protect and to safeguard their rights and guarantee security to European citizens. The EU and the Member States need to optimise, with responsibility and solidarity, a common migration and asylum policy, in which every Member State takes part.

5. The ESU calls for the creation of an effective European security and defence policy including the right balance between preventive and repressive measures, giving strong emphasis to the use of diplomacy and with special attention to the stabilisation of our immediate neighbourhood. Europe and the Member States must assume their responsibility as global players by taking coordinated initiatives in security and defence, at the same time safeguarding the sovereignty and integrity of the States and providing for the sorely-needed security and protection that citizens need and call upon.

6. The EU attaches great importance to good governance, based on the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and democracy. The rule of law is a comprehensive condition for making safe, secure and fair societies possible. The ESU calls to stand against any violation of human rights, to fight corruption in all areas of society and to strengthen the rule of law in both internal and external relations, in particular in the European neighbourhood policies.

The participants at the IXth Congress in Leuven are convinced and aware of the importance of Europe for peace and freedom, for security and wellbeing, and for the fulfilment of all citizens. Also in the future, by means of cooperation and active political participation, they will keep conveying and defending the European values.

- Adopted in Leuven, 5 November 2016.-



1.2. The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is the strategic political body of the association. The Executive Committee is composed as follows: the members of the Presidency and two delegates per member association. The Executive Committee gathered two times in 2016. On 27 May, the Executive Committee held a meeting in Budapest, during the Regional Conference, organised together with the Robert Schuman Institute.

During this Executive Committee meeting, the accounts of the year 2015 were presented by Treasurer Etienne Vanderroost and the preparations of the ESU Congress in November was discussed. The Executive Committee gathered a second time during the Summer Academy in Vienna, on 1 July, when the Congress preparations were elaborated on further.

1.3. The Presidium (or Board)

According to the ESU statutes, the Presidium is composed of the President, (a maximum of) twelve Vice-Presidents, the Secretary General, the Treasurer and the honorary Presidents. The Presidium meets at least two times a year.

The Presidium has inter alia the following competences: ensuring the implementation of decisions taken by the Executive Committee and the Congress; preparing the annual accounts and budget; ensuring the representation of the association; monitoring the work of the Secretary General; issuing statements on behalf of the association; deciding on the admission of Members and Observers; the election of the Secretary General and the Treasurer, upon proposal of the President; preparing the meetings and agenda of the Executive Committee and the Congress. The Presidium met four times in 2016.

The first Presidium meeting in 2016 took place on 11-12 March in Leuven. On the agenda: several organizational aspects, next to information and discussions on EU political decisions and trends. Jonathan Stabenow, member of Commissioner Thyssen's Cabinet (responsible for social affairs, including the effects of demographic changes), gave an update on the upcoming regulations. The Board strongly supported the importance of 'a social Europe' as highlighted by Marianne Thyssen. Siegfried Muresan (Romanian MEP) was also welcomed in the meeting. On top of the discussions were the refugee crisis and the failure of the EU to create a common solution. The participants brought the questions, worries and hopes of their co-citizens from their home countries and associations. They called for a European solution and a common position of all EPP related parties, respecting the values we agreed on. They also expressed their fear for turbulent changes in European societies concerning freedom of religion, security,... The ESU Presidium urged the EPP and all European policy makers for immediate decisions to solve the refugee crisis and to take the experiences and worries of citizens and civil society for serious and valuable.

On 1 July 2016, the Presidium gathered a second time, during the Summer Academy in Vienna. It discussed among others the upcoming ESU conferences and possible new memberships.

Right before the Congress started on 4 November, the outgoing Presidium gathered a final time, discussing some last issues regarding the Congress. On 5 November, after the Congress ended, the new Presidium had its first, short meeting.

The newly elected Presidium consists of:

President An Hermans (BE)
Secretary General Guido Dumon (BE)
Treasurer Etienne Vanderroost (BE)

Vice-Presidents:

Prof. Nikolay Andreev (BG)
MEP Heinz K. Becker (AT)
Antonis Demetriades (CY)
Elke Garczyk (DE)
Janusz Marszalek (PL)
Lidmila Nemcova (CZ)
Marjatta Nykänen (FI)
Dr. Gabriele Peus-Bispinck (DE)
Carmen Quintanilla Barba (ES)
Ann Räämet (EE)
Dr. Christine von Stefenelli-Gostner (IT/Südtirol)
Zvonko Zinrajh (SI)

Our association owes the old Presidium and all candidates for the next mandate its thanks for their support and friendship. The ESU is grateful to them for sharing their experience, knowledge and competences. Special thanks go to the outgoing vice-presidents Sture Eriksson (SE), Jouni Mykkänen (FI) and Anton Bogataj (SI).

1.4. The General Secretariat

The Secretariat General is located in the EPP headquarters (front office, rue de Commerce 10, Brussels). The management and execution are done by the Secretary General through a close dialogue with the President.

As it was agreed in 2014 to run the ESU with a budget of around 90.000 to 100.000 Euro and to use it mainly for the gathering of delegates and leading persons of senior associations, there is no room to hire any permanent staff members. This means that all administrative and content-related work are done on a voluntary basis by the president, secretary general and treasurer, supported by volunteers, such as interns, job students and temporary paid staff members. In 2016 we could count on the cooperation of Manu Jacob, Yolande Vandroogenbroeck, Jeroen Teugels and Florian Jonniaux. We could also count on the administrative and logistical support of CD&V. In 2016 a lot of time and money was needed for the preparation, organisation and follow up of the 9th Congress. During several months Jeroen Teugels, assisted the Secretary General to bring the Congress to a good end. Good cooperation with de CD&V and the EPP and the

special financial support of the Robert Schuman Foundation (president: Ria Oomen-Ruyten) facilitated the organisation of the Congress.

To improve the communication with the ESU associations and with our partners, the general secretariat invested in a new ESU website, which was integrated in the EPP 'house style' and presented at the end of 2016 (<http://esu-epp.eu>). Further, Senior International, the electronic newsletter of the ESU, published its 142 edition at the end of this year. Thanks to Ulrich Winz, and the translations to English by Margit Hawkes, there is a regular update of information. Regularly the Newsletter is also published into Polish and other languages.

With the digital newsletter of the EPP, EPP Inside News, the ESU has, like other EPP members and member associations, the possibility to spread information within the party about its activities. This newsletter is issued on a monthly basis.

Social media are used to increase visibility and communications with not only members, but also with people interested in the ESU. A Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/esu.eu/>), a Flickr account (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/137596848@No6>) and Twitter account (https://twitter.com/esu_epp) are available.

Internal communication to the ESU Presidency is done in English. Communication with the Executive Committee is done in several languages. The three most frequently used are English, German and French.





2. ESU Conferences

2.1. Regional Conference Budapest

The ESU likes to organize joint events with other Associations and Foundations. For a two-days Conference in Budapest (26-27 May) on active ageing and the participation of seniors in public life, we could count on the Robert Schuman Institute, Fidesz and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. For the preparation of this conference, President Hermans and Secretary General Dumon went on 18 January to Budapest to discuss the organisation with the Robert Schuman Institute (RSI). This mission also gave the opportunity to restore the contacts with the senior organisation of FIDESZ and to have contacts with the leaders of other associations of the Christian Democrats and with ONYPE, an independent seniors' organisation, but working together with FIDESZ.

During the first day of the ESU-RSI-Conference, the Hungarian National Seniors' Council presented the work of several working groups. It was an impressive program in the beautiful Hungarian Parliament, where the issues related to active ageing, seniors' representation in media and concepts for multi-generational leisure time activities were presented for almost 200

participants. In her opening speech, ESU President Prof. An Hermans stated that seniors are not a burden but an asset to society. She added that only if citizens have the feeling that the EU cares about them and if they can be involved in European policy making, there will be a future for Europe. The results of the work of the "Seniors' media working group" was presented by Sarolta Monspart, former president of the National Family Leisure Sport Association and former president of the Hungarian Olympic Committee. During her powerful speech, she invited the audience in the Hungarian parliament to do some exercise. Almost everyone followed her for some very joyful moments. The second day of the ESU conference in Budapest started in the morning with an ESU Executive Committee meeting. Afterwards, the conference on Active Ageing and Participation of Seniors in Society resumed with a presentation of prof. Steven Van Hecke, followed by a forum of Hungarian speakers. Further, there were discussion panels with ESU member representatives on the participation of seniors in public and political life, including the arena of European politics, regional differences, approaches to activating seniors, the role of volunteers in civil societies, as well as reflection on Christian values.

2.2. Vienna – Summer Academy

‘Europe must not fail’ that was the title of the 7th Summer Academy for leading seniors (1-3 July 2016), organized by the European Seniors’ Union and the Österreichischer Seniorenbund in the Politische Akademie der ÖVP (Polak) in Vienna, some days after the UK’s Referendum.

Greetings, speeches and presentations came from: Dr. Werner Fasslabend, Honorary President of the Political Academy (PolAk); Tomi Huhtanen, Director of WMCES and Ingrid Korosec, President of the ÖSB. Dr. Marilies Flemming, Prof. Dr. An Hermans, President ESU and prof. Steven Van Hecke from the KU Leuven. Fifty delegates from 22 countries expressed their great concern about what is happening in Europe. The ESU strongly regretted the British voters’ choice to leave the EU and urged political leaders at all levels to stay wholeheartedly committed to the European project, to defend the fundamentals of the EU Treaties and to oppose nationalistic tendencies. Analysing the results of the British referendum, the ESU is very concerned about the striking generation gap shown by the referendum and urged more intergenerational dialogue and strong European leadership for the upcoming crucial phase of the European integration process. ESU President An Hermans argued: “The older generations of Europe have personally experienced the cruelty of wars and dictatorship and have themselves actively contributed to the reconstruction of their communities and to the build-up of modern welfare states. For them, Europe gave ‘a hope for better times’. Falling back on nationalism in difficult times cannot be an option for the future. We plead for ‘intergenerational dialogues for democracy’ where young and older citizens can bring in their experiences and hopes.” The ESU will continue supporting the European project and its overreaching goal of preserving peace and security, developing a strong Europe in a globalizing world and promoting a better future for all its generations.

2.3. Regional Conference Ljubljana

In Slovenia, the senior associations of the three parties affiliated to the EPP (SDS, NSi and SLS) worked together to organize an ESU conference in Ljubljana in the fall of 2016. On Friday 5 February, President Hermans had meetings with the presidents of the seniors’ associations (Mr. Zvone Zinrajh, Mr. Jože Jurkovic, Mr. Anton Bogataj) to discuss the content and format of this conference. This conference would face several Slovenian and European challenges: the migration issue, the role of family in society and the important role of seniors in volunteer work. An important contribution was expected from MEPs (Alojz Peterle, Romana Tomc and Franc Bogovič actively participated) as well.



In this way these conferences could be an exchange of ideas between senior citizens and our European political representatives.

On 21-22 October 2016, the regional Conference on ‘Civil Society and Active Participation’ took place. The first ESU conference in Ljubljana was successful. Thanks to the presidents of the three Slovenian ESU senior associations (SDS seniors – Zvone Zinrajh, Nova Slovenija seniors – Jože Jurkovic, SLS seniors – Anton Bogataj), who took the initiative to organise this conference.

At the opening session, the presidents of the three mother parties (SDS- Mr. Janez Janša, NSi-Mr. Jožef Horvat, vice-president, SLS-Mr. Marko Zidanšek) welcomed all the participants. ESU President Hermans emphasized the need of working together at the European level to achieve our common goals. President Hermans concluded the Ljubljana conference after the adoption of a final declaration: Ageing Europe should not be an incentive for instability or an encouragement for migration flows. She highlighted some challenges for intergenerational solidarity and cohesion in European societies and confirmed the statement of Prof. dr. Andrej Umek on the key challenge of youth employment.

In the Ljubljana Declaration, the participants of the conference emphasised among other that the demographic situation in the European Union is an important but unnecessary barrier to the development of synergies between generations.

3. Participation in the EPP

3.1. Celebration 40 years of EPP

On 30 May, the celebration of 40 years of European People's Party took place in Luxembourg. The event featured top EU and non-EU leaders. On that special occasion, the EPP published a booklet within 40 special moments of the EPP history. As part of the EPP family, the ESU was also present in both the event and the booklet.

The ESU was presented as follows in booklet '40 years of EPP Family':

The European Seniors' Union (ESU), the EPP's official association to represent seniors' interest within our political family, was founded in 1995 in the course of the EPP Congress that took place in Madrid. The ESU is a network of 37 associations, located in 27 countries, and is led by its President, An Hermans, who succeeded longstanding President Bernhard Worms. The ESU is dedicated to the advancement of rights of European senior citizens and their engagement in society. The aims of the ESU are the promotion of the role of seniors in ageing European societies, the fight against discrimination of the elderly, reform of European pension systems, the fostering of intergenerational solidarity and the promotion of seniors' volunteering and participation in society.

3.2. EPP Political Assembly

The Political Assembly defines the political positions of the Party between each Congress, deciding on membership applications and final political guidelines. The Political Assembly also decides on the budget and safeguards the political presence of the EPP between Congress meetings. The ESU is represented in the Political Assembly by ESU President An Hermans.

3.3. EPP Working Groups

3.3.1. EPP Working Group 1

Co-chaired by EPP President Joseph DAUL and EPP Vice-President and MEP David McAllister, Working Group 1 'European Policy' has the task of preparing the EPP's most vital policy papers and Congress documents on European issues. It will also prepare the congress document for the 2017 EPP Congress in Malta. As in previous years, dr. Marilies Flemming represented the ESU in this Working Group in 2016.

3.3.2. EPP Working Group 2

Working Group 2 'Economic and social policy', co-chaired by Irish Minister for European Affairs and Data Protection and EPP Vice-President Dara Murphy and EPP Vice-President Corien Wortmann-Kool, is focused on responding to the current economic and financial crisis, the Lisbon process, demographic issues, and research and development. ESU Vice-President Heinz K. Becker, MEP, represents the ESU in this Working Group. The ESU participated in and prepared several amendments to the Working Group's draft discussion papers.

3.3.3. 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, associate 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 organisations. ESU Vice President Nikolay Andreev (BG) represents the ESU in this Working Group.



4. Other events and representations

4.1. Friends of ESU

For the European Seniors' Union, a meeting with 'Friends of the ESU' (EP, 5 April 2016) is a source of stimulating ideas. This group met for the first time in the autumn 2014 on the initiative of ESU- President An Hermans and ESU-Vice-president Heinz K. Becker (MEP). To the group belong EPP MEPs who want to promote the concerns of seniors in European politics. On 5 April 2016, a lunch-discussion of the Friends of ESU took place. The debate was focused on the effects of the 'New Pillar of Social Rights' on seniors' politics and intergenerational solidarity. Jonathan Stabenow, member of the cabinet of Commissioner Marianne Thyssen explained that in annex to the European Commission communication on the Social Pillar, a broad consultation is launched with all the stakeholders, also with civil society organizations and individual citizens. Afterwards, a self-standing legal reference document will be developed to define and implement European social values. The initiative involves countries in the Euro Area to begin with, while remaining open to all EU Member States who wish to take part. The ESU welcomed this initiative and supports it wholeheartedly.

The Friends of the ESU met a second time in 2016 on 29 September, when upcoming ESU events were presented and MEPs discussed their involvement in several current European policy projects.

4.2. Stiftung Jugend und Senioren

On 29-30 April, the ESU participated in a festive event in the former Benedictine Abbey of Brauweiler-Pulheim. To mark the European Day of Solidarity between generations dr. Bernhard Worms organised the launch of the Foundation 'Youth and Seniors for Europe' with committed speakers, interesting discussions, and an excellent organization of dr. Worms and his team. The new foundation emerged from the "Helmut Kohl Golden Badge of Honour" Foundation. The conversion was carried out at the request of former Chancellor dr. Kohl. "Like its predecessor, the Foundation pursues the goal of serving Europe," dr. Worms stressed. It is intended to give students a grant for researching and working on ways to strengthen the integration of Europe.

The speakers talked about the successes of European integration, possible risks and ways to overcome them. Among the list of speakers of the congress were: ESU President prof. An Hermans, dr. Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the Konrad-Adenauer Founda-

tion; prof. dr. Jürgen Rüttgers, former Federal Minister and Prime Minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, MEP Elmar Brok, as well as prof. Steven Van Hecke, Catholic University of Leuven. Dr. Stefan Gehrold, from the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation in Brussels, chaired a discussion forum. For the debate about 'Intergenerational solidarity' also young participants were invited: MEP Tom Vandenkendelaere and Eva Majewski, head of the Youth CDU/CSU fraction in the German parliament. Young and older participants had fruitful and inspiring discussions. Dr. Pöttering urged not to forget the lessons of the history of European integration, and to teach history as a lesson for the future, even when it comes to the current immigration crisis. 'There is no reason to despair of Europe' he said, "there is always a way out, because we must achieve it and we want it".

4.3. Representation in AGE

AGE (AGE Platform Europe), which was set up in 2001, is a European network of more than 150 organisations of and for people aged 50+ representing directly over 40 million older people in Europe. As such AGE is political party neutral. AGE takes active part in several EU projects and thereby plays an advisory role versus the EU Commission. Leif Hallberg (SE) represents the ESU in the Administrative Council and the General Assembly of AGE. Elisabeth Dispaux (BE) is substitute.

To mark the European Day of Solidarity between Generations, (29 April), the European Parliament Intergroup on Active Ageing, Intergenerational Solidarity and Family policies, AGE Platform Europe and the European Youth Forum organised an event on 26 April to shed light on the widespread experiences of ageism at both ends of the life spectrum. Also Heinz K Becker (MEP), vice-president of the European Seniors' Union-ESU participated in the event.

4.4. Meetings and encounters with seniors' associations

It is obvious that our ESU meetings and conferences are also meeting places to exchange experiences and to develop new initiatives. Regional conferences are often prepared in direct dialogues between the presidency and the organizing member associations as mentioned above (see Regional Conferences of Budapest and Ljubljana).

It is always a pleasure to participate in the commitment of member associations.

4.4.1. 40th anniversary Moderata Seniorer

At the invitation of Dr. Bertil Persson, President of Moderata Seniorer, the ESU took part in the biennial meeting of the Moderata Party in Malmö on 20 May. A big event of about 2000 delegates coming from all over the country. The delegates discussed different themes, which are relevant for the local level, in several workshops and seminars. In the afternoon, the Moderata Seniors celebrated their 40th anniversary. Prof. An Hermans, president of the ESU, was the guest speaker at this celebration. Referring to the notion of active citizenship she stated: "Seniors care about Europe, about everything in Europe". She highlighted three domains of interest for the future: the need for 'more Union in our Europe' (Juncker), the well-being of seniors and the integration of refugees in our societies. On that same day, President Hermans congratulated Dr. Persson with his 79th birthday. At the end of the annual meeting, Anna Kinberg Batra, party leader, presented a 'new plan' for Sweden.

4.4.2. Meeting CSV seniors

Also on 30 May, during celebration of 40 years of European People's Party in Luxembourg, the ESU President Prof. An Hermans met in the morning with the leadership of CSV seniors in Luxembourg. An interesting exchange of views and a discussion on the future cooperation between the CSV seniors and the ESU.

4.4.3. Getting nearer to European politics

In previous years, An Hermans was happy to welcome visitor groups and explain more about how Europe works. It is possible to contact your MEPs, so they can invite you. This way, you become their 'guests' (including some financial support for the journey). This year President Hermans welcomed Claus Bernhold and the CDU-Seniors from Baden-Württemberg in Leuven, where she gave the group a small speech about the European Seniors' Union.

4.5. Participation in other events

4.5.1. IDEA Roundtable on Intergenerational Dialogue for Democracy

The Office of International IDEA to the EU invited the ESU for a Roundtable on the Intergenerational Dialogue for Democracy on Tuesday, 31 May 2016. Prof. Tomaž Deželan, Ph.D., University of Ljubljana, presented an inspiring Discussion paper. On 17 November, the discussion on the Intergenerational Dialogue continued. Some proposals for new policy instruments to increase the intergenerational dialogue were presented. An Hermans defended that "promoting the dialogue and cooperation between generations should be mainstream in policy considerations." She stated: "An intergenerational impact assessment sounds as a very good idea, but it should be applied to policy areas in which seniors' concerns are at the top of the political agenda (such as health, mobility and social services)

but also in policy areas that are less self-evident like culture, sports and energy (cf. energy poverty)". Moreover, cooperation among generations should be seen as an important pillar of an inclusive society. This should be experienced in the first place on a local level. Rather than establishing top-down new organisations we should strengthen existing bottom-up initiatives with a clear political agenda to strengthen intergenerational cooperation rather than segregation."

4.5.2. Robert Schuman Institute

The Robert Schuman Institute for developing Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe organised on 17 February its General Assembly in Brussels. President Hermans represents the European Seniors' Union in this Assembly.

On 3 June and on the fourth and last day of an event of the Robert Schuman Institute in Brussels, a meeting with some of the EPP organisations was organised. Young politicians of the Balkan countries were given the opportunity to meet representatives of the European Democrat Students and of course the European Seniors' Union. In the premises of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies information was given about the ESU by President Hermans. For a seminar of the Robert Schuman Institute on 'How Europe Works', on 17 November, President Hermans met several young people coming from the Eastern European Partnership countries at the EPP Headquarters.

4.5.3. Forum Discussions, seminars and panel debates

As President of the ESU, An Hermans has participated in several debates and discussions. On 16 June the ESU participated in a forum discussion on seniors and seniors' associations in the Annual meeting of the Eastern European Partnership.

On 2 May 2016, she also participated in an event, organised by the European Union of Christian Democratic Workers (EUCDW) and the Belgian Christian workers' movement (beweging.net), on 'The Way Forward for the European Social Market Economy', on the occasion of 125 years Rerum Novarum.

On 12 October, she gave a keynote speech at a workshop, organised by the EPP Group in the European Parliament, with almost 150 participants during the European Week of Regions and Cities at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels- aiming to change the perception of demographic change by showcasing European regions and cities that are turning the challenges of ageing populations, low birth-rates and new arrivals into opportunities.

At the invitation of the European Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, President Hermans moderated, in Sankt-Augustin on 14 October, a seminar on how to share values in our political parties and work together with people with different cultural, religious and historical backgrounds. There were interesting discussions and enriching encounters.

4.5.4. International Day of Older Persons

Since 1990, the United Nations designate 1 October as the 'International Day of Older Persons'. Worldwide, the rights of older persons, the increased life expectancy and the challenges of ageing societies are given special attention to. How to add life to years? How to live life at the fullest? How to stand against ageism and discrimination?

On the occasion of this day, the ESU released a message of President Hermans in which she stresses that an age-friendly society means more than the planning and creation of some services and structures related to the specific needs of older people. The ESU called for an inclusive age friendly society. One that is based on a positive attitude towards ageing. The ESU strongly condemned ageism and discrimination, and calls for more respect and dignity towards the older generations. Only in equitable cooperation between young and old, the future of Europe can be shaped.

5. Looking ahead

The EU is facing looming challenges: the promotion and implementation of reform programs to guarantee economic growth and employment, social protection and security, the further development of the Economic and Monetary Union, the completion of the Internal Market, transparency and democratic political policy-making,... All this was compounded recently by the problem of hundreds and thousands of refugees and the need for security, as never seen before. As President Tusk mentioned: "A sense of security needs to be regained, as it is a fundamental need for every human being, as important as the need for freedom." Our political decision makers, at the European level and also in the Member States, have an enormous responsibility. But not only Heads of State and Governments, are involved, also citizens, civil society, and economic and social stakeholders have a role to play in the choices we make for the development of Europe.

We, seniors, are worried about the future of Europe, but we do not want our actions to be determined by fear and uncertainty. We call on the European leaders, the governments of the member states and mostly the European People's Party (EPP) to do everything to tackle the many challenges together, in responsibility and solidarity. We do not want to ignore the conflicts and threats in the historical context we are living in. We are faced with challenges for which there are no ready-made answers in the instrumentarium developed by generations. And yet, the words of Konrad Adenauer hold as much as they did before: "Die Einheit Europas war ein Traum weniger. Sie wurde eine Hoffnung für viele. Sie ist heute eine Notwendigkeit für alle". (The unity of Europe was a dream of a few. It became a hope for many. Today, it is a necessity for all

.) That was and is the major challenge: giving form to the "necessity for all".

I believe that this 'necessity for all' is in the first place the 'community of values' and a place of security and freedom where citizens feel safe and free, a place that Europe was and wants to be. A community of men and women working across borders towards a society where each human being is treated with dignity, justice and solidarity. For me, these values were part of my education based on Christianity, for others they are based on the Enlightenment and Humanism. For the EPP, these values are at the heart of our political vision and operational goals. I hope that these bring us to the necessary new or renewed solutions for the challenges of today.

Also in the coming months, these challenges will dominate the public discussions at the European level. The demographic changes will be a constant phenomenon appearing on the policy table. In the next months, the ESU will draw the attention to the consequences, challenges and opportunities of demographic changes. As pointed out at the IXth Congress, we are confronted all over Europe with the consequences of an increased life expectancy and decreasing birth rates. However, it is clear that the effects of an ageing population on the economy, employment, social security, healthcare,... have different results throughout Europe. Some questions arise then: how can we master these problems? What needs to be done at the European level and what can be done at the national, regional and local level? How is the so-called 'silver economy', i.e. economic opportunities brought by expenditure related to population ageing and the needs of older citizens, an increasingly important dimension of development strategies for research, innovation, business strategies and public authorities? And... how can seniors and young people be involved in the development of this inclusive society, responding to the needs of all generations? How can we share our experiences with young people in intergenerational dialogues?

The answers to these questions will be explored in the coming months and years, in local and regional communities, in exchanges of good practices, in communication and discussions with politicians, in regional conferences and seminars.

'Address by President Donald Tusk at the 71st United Nations General Assembly', European Union - EEAS (European External Action Service), 22 September 2016, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/press_corner/all_news/news/2016/2016092202_en.htm.

"Die Einheit Europas war ein Traum von wenigen. Sie wurde eine Hoffnung für viele. Sie ist heute eine Notwendigkeit für uns alle. Sie ist notwendig für unsere Sicherheit, für unsere Freiheit, für unser Dasein als Nation und als geistig schöpferische Völkergemeinschaft. Uns ist, das ist meine feste Überzeugung, die Entscheidung in die Hand gegeben, Europa und mit ihm Deutschland Frieden und Freiheit zu sichern ..." Government declaration 15 December 1954, (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung. Bonn 1954) <http://www.konrad-adenauer.de/dokumente/erklarungen/regierungserklarung15>

We look forward to...

*meeting you in upcoming events
listening to your experiences
creating together a common
perspective for an inclusive society
for all ages*

Let us make it happen.



Member associations

Austria

Österreichischer Seniorenbund

Belgium

CD&V-senioren
Les Aînés du cdH

Bulgaria

Seniors of GERB (SGERB)

Croatia

Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica

Cyprus

Senior Citizens Organisation of Cyprus (OSCC)

Czech Republic

Sdružení křesťanských seniorů (SKS)

Estonia

IRL Seenioride Kogu

Finland

Kansallinen Senioriliitto ry

Germany

Senioren-Union der CDU Deutschlands
Senioren-Union der CSU

Greece

Seniors of Nea Demokratia

Hungary

Seniors Fidesz
Országos Nyugdíjas Polgari Egyesület (ONYPE)

Italy

SVP-Seniorenbewegung (Süd-Tirol)

Latvia

Latvian Christian Seniors Union

Lithuania

HU-LCD Senior Citizens Club

Luxembourg

Chrëschtlech Sozial Vollekspartei (CSV)

Malta

Assoċjazzjoni Penjsonanti Anzjani Nazzjonalisti (APAN)

The Netherlands

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Norway

Senior Høyres Landsforbund

Poland

Polska Unia Seniorów (PUS)
Stowarzyszenie Parlamentarzystów Ruchu
Ludowego PSL

Romania

Partidul National Taranesco Crestin Democrat (PNTCD)

Slovakia

Združenie kresťanských seniorov Slovenska
(ZKSS KDH)

Slovenia

Klub seniorjev in seniork pri SDS (KSS SDS)
Zveza seniorjev Nova Slovenija (N.Si)
Zveza upokojencev pri SLS

Spain

Comisión Nacional del Mayor del Partido Popular
Unió de la Gent Gran (UDC)

Sweden

Moderata Seniorer
Kristdemokraterna Seniorförbundet

Observer associations

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PUBP "Nasha Pakalenne"

EU

Europäisches Zentrum für Arbeitnehmerfragen (EZA)

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Ukrainian Association of Retired Persons (UARP)

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