



Resolution of the Prague Conference of the ESU in March 2020

SECURING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL GENERATIONS IN EUROPE

PREAMBLE

Entering the new decade 2020-2030 this Resolution emphasizes the most relevant concepts, programmes, missions and messages at European level aiming for a positive development of our societies in order to secure the quality of life for all generations. Our text is inspired by the ESU Declaration of Sandanski (2019), the Emergency Resolution adopted at the European Peoples Party's Congress in Zagreb (2019), the communication of the European Commission for the Conference on the Future of Europe (2020), and recent speeches by European Commission President von der Leyen in Brussels and Berlin (2019).

We define quality of life determined by primary factors as health, living conditions, productive activity, education, social interactions, safety, basic rights and a balanced environment.

Europe is facing a remarkable number of challenges which makes it necessary for EU institutions and all national governments to develop consequent policies and – above all – to create unity between all European national governments to make clear decisions and to take the necessary actions. At the same time, all decision-makers in European politics must show their willingness to compromise and to do everything in their power to overcome the current disparities.

Our continent's future needs much stronger cooperation to maintain the global role of Europe as there will be only 5% of Europeans globally, and not one member state will amount to more than 1 % of the total world population. This means our only chance is to cooperate as much as possible.

This should be the motto for the whole Europe of from today onward: standing together in mastering future challenges for the benefit of all Europeans.

FOCUS ON THE INTERESTS OF PEOPLE OF ALL AGES

Europe is part of an ever-changing world. Multiple shifts and tendencies regarding economics, IT technology, security climate and demographics are having an impact on our lives. The world is becoming increasingly complex and interconnected nowadays. The rise of populism shows that decision-makers are losing their connection with citizens throughout Europe.

The European Seniors' Union demands from political decision-makers in Europe and from its national governments to set the following priorities in order to secure the quality of life for all generations:

1) SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY

It is high time that policies become more in line with the needs of the citizens. Listening to them is indispensable for establishing a certain degree of participation. Following the principle of subsidiarity, the focus should be the creation of multiple partnerships, effectively connecting them with local actors and individual citizens in a non-institutionalized manner. Also, citizens in Europe with no history of grass-roots movements need to feel appealed to and supported by the EU through concrete and tailor-made actions.

This will help to establish a European identity based on our common values and beliefs in a clear commitment to the core values of Europe, founded on respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

2) INFORM EUROPEAN CITIZENS ABOUT THE EUROPEAN VALUES

Widespread populism finds its basis in misinformation and the exacerbation of the clash between the ordinary citizen and the political proponents. It is up to the EU and all other decision-makers to make clear how they are improving the life of citizens throughout Europe, at every level.

However, it is up to the European citizens to incorporate the European values and at the same time to actively inform themselves about these and also what the EU delivers for them at present and for coming generations.

3) ACT AS A EUROPEAN ENTITY

The challenges of the post-Brexit era, trade conflicts between big players like the USA and China, global epidemics like the Covid-19 virus, a possible decline in economic growth, new irregular migration, conflicts around Europe affecting our borders and our external security, continuous threats of terrorism, increasing populism accompanied by radicalism and anti-Semitism, all those fields which determine the quality of life for our citizens, need the strongest possible cooperation by all European countries, because most of today's challenges cannot be mastered by a single nation but only as a European entity. This includes the (demand / request?) to the European Commission and the European Parliament to act decisively, with uninterrupted efforts and initiative.

With regard to the migration flows at present, Europe has to act as an entity in order to fulfill all the humanitarian obligations of the Geneva Refugee Convention, but at the same time avoiding illegal migration because this affects European society and demography in an undesirable way.

The ESU requests that European politicians and institutions act strongly and in a unified way.

4) SAVE EUROPE'S NATURE AND ENVIRONMENT TOGETHER

The EU's Green Deal must be realized, including the reduction of CO2 emissions and building up a circular economy. We support the EU's plan to invest 1 billion Euro over the next 10 years to overcome the problems of climate change and to support all branches of the economy, industry and research.

The ESU accepts a mutual responsibility by younger and older citizens in building a prosperous and unspoiled environment for the future of coming generations. The responsible authorities in the EU and in our national governments must find equitable solutions to integrate this positive approach.

5) MAKE DIGITALIZATION A SUCCESS FOR ALL

Europe's role will primarily depend on its successful ability to compete in global digitalization. The outcome will decide the future of Europe's leading role in the world and our strength in

science and research, including whether Europe can keep being the driver for innovation to support our economic growth and stabilizing our welfare systems. In addition, we need appropriate skills and qualifications for all people to master the new technologies. Lifelong Learning is the most effective tool to turn this challenge into a success. Vocational training should become the rule in all member states, not only for the youth but also for older workers — all ages should have full access.

The ESU demands from the decision-makers to regulate fair conditions for all ages during their life-cycles to manage changes in the labour market as well as in their retirement period. Pensioners should become well-informed users of digital technologies in their everyday life.

6) DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Europe is severely confronted with a major demographic change caused by declining birth-rates and an increasing life expectancy. This affects various regions in Europe differently. Some risk becoming victims of depopulation, decreasing investment, reduced transport connections and diminishing educational, welfare and cultural services. Citizens feel left behind, hence they feel discontent and disappointment, and this of course is not without an impact on the functioning of our democracies.

In order to avoid conflicts between generations, all European states have a special responsibility to strengthen platforms for intergenerational dialogue in order to secure the best possible models of cooperation between younger and older populations and to develop a maximum of opportunities for lifelong learning and to optimize the skills of workers across all age groups. EU institutions and national governments need to invest in the rapidly growing 'Silver Economy', for the benefit of all generations, by creating economic growth, innovation and new jobs.

The ESU calls upon all European countries to acknowledge the important work of volunteers. Furthermore, to acknowledge that rising life expectancy is not only a challenge but also offers great possibilities, e.g. for those who want to be active in the society for additional years or who want to work longer to increase their pensions.

7) SECURE THE AFFORDABILITY OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS

It is the legal responsibility of national governments to ensure the quality and affordability of their social security systems, following the Commission's yearly Recommendations of the European Semester.

As the most urgent problems, pension systems need regulations to adjust the retirement age in line with the increasing life expectancy, health systems need to make prevention and life-long healthy ageing the basis for all measures, and the work of professionals in the care system has to be rated much higher in order to gain many more qualified personnel for the increasing demand.

The responsible European politicians are strongly requested to put into effect what exists already: "The European Pillar of Social Rights", which includes all major fields of action to secure and develop the future of our "Social Europe", integrating an ambitious social dialogue and an active role for the social partners.

8) MAKE THE "CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE" SUCCESSFUL

On the forthcoming Europe Day, 9 May 2020, the "Conference on the Future of Europe" will be launched and will run for two years. Announced by President Ursula von der Leyen in her Political Guidelines, it will give Europeans a greater say in what the European Union does and how it works for them. The Conference will build on past experiences, such as citizens' dialogues, while introducing a wide range of new elements to increase outreach and strengthen ways for people to shape the EU's action in the future. The Conference will allow an open, transparent and structured debate with citizens of diverse backgrounds and from all walks of life. The Commission is committed to follow up on the outcome.

The European Seniors' Union will follow enthusiastically the whole process of this new impulse for European democracy and will deliver useful inputs in the interest of all generations!

References to the above Resolution are available at: www.esu-epp.eu

Prague, 11.03.2020