



# Europe as a task:

## Let's turn challenges into opportunities for all generations

Summer Academy 10-13 July 2023 Leuven, Brussels

### A. Objectives and European Dimension:

1. A Summer Academy: Learning, Exchanging, Inspiring, and Acting Competently
  - Our Summer Academy is being organized to provide a platform for seniors' associations to come together in Leuven, Belgium, for three days, with a day-long visit to Brussels. The primary objective of this event is to foster learning, exchange of ideas, inspiration, and competent action.
  - Individuals representing their seniors' associations will gather to share their expertise and engage in discussions about the significant global trends shaping our world today. They will explore the political responses required to address these challenges.
  - During the Summer Academy, experienced speakers will address the audience. The focus will be on providing up-to-date information about European policies concerning future challenges, particularly in relation to age and ageing.
  - This event aims to facilitate the exchange of experiences and perspectives on the well-being of all generations. Participants will express their ambitions, needs, and hopes for the future of the societies in which we live. By doing so, they seek to emphasize the importance of incorporating the values for which previous generations fought: freedom and peace, democracy, and the rule of law, bringing well-being, prosperity, and progress.

- As a "follow-up" to the Summer Academy, closing remarks will be delivered, urging policymakers to prioritize human-centered politics that honor the values cherished by older generations. These values have played a crucial role in shaping our societies and have the potential to ensure a brighter future for all.

## 2. Demographic Change: One of the Major Transformations of the 21st Century

### 2.1 The Priorities of the EU Commission and the Challenges at Hand

- The European Union is currently facing a complex and challenging period, where the priorities set by the EU Commission for the governance period of 2019-2024 (*Green Deal, digital transformation, a stronger Europe in the world, an economy that works for people, a new push for democracy, promoting the European way of life,...*) are overshadowed by emergency challenges, namely the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war. These unforeseen circumstances have significantly impacted Member States and societies, leading to a slow recovery from the consequences of the pandemic and grappling with the repercussions of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This invasion has resulted in the destruction of the country, the disruption of Europe's security architecture, and a shift in geopolitical power relations across military, economic, cultural, and moral domains.
- However, amidst these external challenges, we must not overlook the internal challenges within Europe itself. Demographic change stands as one of the significant transformations of the 21st century, and its implications necessitate the EU's attention and action. Moreover, it is crucial to address how we can protect our own people from threats such as unemployment, soaring prices of essential goods, precarious employment, and growing inequalities. By focusing on a people-centered approach and upholding the principles of a trustworthy economic and political Union, the EU can navigate these challenges, safeguard the well-being of its citizens, and strengthen its autonomy in an ever-changing geopolitical landscape.
- Citizens expect to live and work in a secure environment, leading fulfilling lives, and relying on their governments and political representatives to establish a reliable economic and political Union. This Union should guarantee peace, prosperity, and enhanced autonomy in the face of the current threatening geopolitical situation.

### 2.2. "Demographic Change: one of the 'deepest-lying challenges' for European societies"- Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission

- The ageing of our societies is one of the 'megatrends' of the 21st century, significantly impacting not only older individuals but also presenting challenges across all sectors of society. While Member States and local governments bear primary responsibility for addressing ageing-related issues, the EU can play a significant role in providing a policy response.
- Recognizing the pressing need for a comprehensive strategy on demographic change, the EU has designated Vice-President Mrs. Dubravka Šuica as responsible for

developing political actions concerning age and ageing. This approach considers the variations between Member States and regions. In recent years, the EU has established a framework of decisions that inspire and support actions by Member States.

- Key aspects of the new policy include mainstreaming ageing considerations across all policy areas, adopting a human rights approach, considering healthy ageing as a dimension of the life-course, ensuring the inclusion of older persons in the digital era, and ensuring the availability of high-quality long-term care for those in need. It is evident that the successful implementation and outcomes of these policies require collaboration not only among different policy levels but also with civil society.
- The ESU has closely followed the entire policy-making process as closely as possible throughout the 2019-2024 EU government period. Most recently we agreed on a resolution about the EU long term care strategy and are looking forward to the follow up.
- Overall, addressing the challenges posed by population ageing requires a comprehensive approach, with Member States, local governments, the EU, and civil society working together. By adopting effective policies and strategies that promote healthy ageing, safeguard human rights, and ensure accessible and high-quality care, we can navigate the impact of demographic change and foster inclusive societies for all generations.

**B. Target Group of the Activity:**

Seniors, representatives from seniors' associations and experts from all over Europe

**C. Estimated number of people participating in the Activity:**

50 persons

# Draft Program

## Monday, July 10 (Leuven, Park Inn Hotel)

**17h00:** Presidency meeting with guest speaker Prof Steven Van Hecke

**19h00:** Welcome dinner for all participants

## Tuesday, July 11 (Leuven, Brussels)

**08h45:** Departure by bus to Brussels

**10h00:** Meeting at the European Commission (Berlaymont Building)

- Functioning of the European Commission by Marco La Marca, member of cabinet of VP Dubravka Šuica
- The role of 'the European semester' by Gerrit De Bethuyne (DG ECFIN)

**12h30:** Departure by bus to the EPP Headquarters

- Lunch
- "The EPP Strategy for the 2024 European Elections" by Thanasis Bakolas, EPP Secretary General
- "Brussels, capital of Europe" by Brigitte Grouwels, vice-president of CD&V seniors and former minister in the Brussels government

**15h00:** Departure to the Parliamentarium: free visit

Departure by train to Leuven

**19h00:** Dinner at the Park Inn hotel

## Wednesday, July 12 (meeting in Council chamber 'Provinciehuis' (ESU – CD&V)- Provincieplein 1, 3000 Leuven)

**09h30:** Welcome by:

- Tom Dehaene, provincial executive Flemish Brabant;
- Thomas Belligh, International Secretary CD&V
- An Hermans, president ESU

**10h00 - 12h15:** "The European challenges"

- Keynote speech by Herman Van Rompuy, President Emeritus of the European Council
- Discussant: Marilyn Neven (IDEA)
- Discussion and Q and A moderated by Heinz Becker, ESU- vice president and former MEP (Austria)

**12h30:** Lunch

**13h30:** Presentation of the new Martens Centre Survey on: 'Regaining the Middle Ground for the Centre Right' by Tomi Huhtanen, Executive Director Martens Centre  
+ Discussant: Kevin Maas (YEPP)

Coffee break

**15h00:** Standing together for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The role of 'the greater Europe' after the Reykjavik summit (16-17 May 2023) by Patrick Penninckx, Head of Information Society, Council of Europe

Discussants:

- Julia Wadoux, policy advisor AGE Platform Europe
- Eline Chivot, senior policy advisor EPP

**17h30:** Conclusions, An Hermans

**18h30:** Dinner at the Province House

Thursday, July 13 (meeting in the provincial house of the province of Flemish Brabant)

**09h30:** Welcome

**09h45:** News from the ESU associations: Thoughts and experiences to share with European Colleagues.

**11h45:** Executive Committee

- Financial issues
- Looking ahead

**12h30:** End of the Summer Academy

*The Conference receives financial support from the European Parliament.  
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