

2023 **annual
report**

**Europe as
a task:**
Let's turn
challenges into
opportunities for
all generations





Foreword

After more than a decade at the forefront of the European Seniors' Union (ESU), this report marks our 'final annual report'. We approach it with the perspective of 'passing the torch'. We conclude the year 2023 with immense gratitude, reflecting on the many joyful encounters, the statements and resolutions, and the new directions we've diligently worked on. So, let's look back at the past years, with a particular focus on 2023.

The ESU serves as an 'umbrella association' for organisations across Europe. In recent years, we've also explored the landscape of various EU Member States and European policies concerning seniors' welfare. Impressive were the encounters with our peers, their life stories, and their struggles for democracy and human rights. The awareness of this diversity has added a unique dimension to concepts like 'solidarity,' 'human rights,' and 'social protection'.

We've endeavoured to make our gatherings true 'meeting places' where, alongside necessary decisions regarding the management and organisation of our Association, there was ample room for information, discussion, exchange, and learning from one another. We hoped that this openness and the spirit of 'standing shoulder to shoulder' in the quest for common perspectives would also affect national and local associations. It was always a pleasure when we saw this, but all too often we also noticed that the ideas and proposals didn't go beyond the delegations within the ESU; they weren't further embraced or developed. We considered this as missed opportunities.

As 'active citizens' in the European civil society, we felt it was our duty to closely follow the workings of European politics and, where possible, make the voices of seniors heard among decision-makers, especially within the European People's Party (EPP). A 'human rights approach' guided our actions. In our annual report, you can read about how this approach took shape in areas such as digitalization and long-term care. The recent years have been particularly complex, partly due to geopolitical developments. Because of our connection with the EPP, the Christian democratic perspective and the EPP's search for alignment with the expectations and disappointments of European citizens have also been our concern. In the coming years, it will be a significant challenge to develop new forms of participation in democratic decision-making.

Seniors who engage in civil society and take responsibility to make society better for their fellow citizens and all generations through 'ageing better' are truly admirable. They carry a unique heritage with them, a heritage of the journey they've taken through life and the values and norms of their generation. We have sought to pass on this heritage to our peers and to younger generations who understand that progress only comes through cherishing both experience and innovation. We are exceptionally pleased to be part of this 'supportive generation' and grateful that we can share a vision of the future with the younger generation. We thank you all for your unwavering support during the previous years and wish you a pleasant reading.

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In Memoriam of **Dr. Marilies Flemming**

It is with profound sadness that we share the news of the passing of Marilies Flemming, the driving force behind the creation of our ESU Summer Academy. She served as an inspiration to many, and her absence will be deeply felt. Our beloved Marilies passed away, leaving behind a legacy that will forever be cherished.

Dr. Flemming (16 December 1933 – 9 July 2023) passed away peacefully at her home in Vienna, at the age of 89, with her family by her side.

The ESU will deeply miss Dr. Marilies Flemming, a remarkable European with extensive experience in politics and a dynamic advocate for the older generation. Her absence leaves a void that will be felt profoundly.

Our focus of 2023: 'Europe as a task; Let's turn challenges into opportunities for all generations'

In the past year, the ESU has been steadfast in its commitment to addressing the pressing issues surrounding demographic change. The landscape of Europe is evolving, and demographic shifts are one of the most profound transformations of the 21st century.

As the EU struggled with unforeseen crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions, the ESU has been keenly focused on highlighting the significance of demographic change within the broader scope of challenges faced by Member States. These challenges extend beyond immediate crises, encompassing issues such as unemployment, rising costs of essential goods, precarious job markets, and growing disparities among citizens. Our emphasis remains on safeguarding the well-being of citizens by championing a people-centric approach and reinforcing the foundational principles of a reliable economic and political Union.

The ageing of European societies is not merely a statistic but a reality that demands proactive policy responses. Vice-President Mrs. Dubravka Šuica has taken a commendable step in steering political actions concerning age and ageing, understanding the diverse regional implications. The EU's strategic decisions underscore the importance of integrating ageing considerations across policies, prioritising human rights, promoting healthy ageing, ensuring digital inclusion for older individuals, and advocating for high-quality long-term care. Collaboration among different policy levels and civil society is pivotal in translating these decisions into effective actions.

Throughout the 2019-2024 EU governance period, the ESU has diligently monitored policy formulation and resolutions. We eagerly anticipate the forthcoming steps in the implementation of the EU's long-term care strategy.

During its operations and events over the past year, the ESU placed a significant emphasis on the challenges posed by population ageing. It necessitates a cohesive approach involving Member States, local administrations, the EU, and civil society. Robust policies that support healthy ageing, uphold fundamental rights, and provide accessible, top-tier care are indispensable in steering through demographic transitions and cultivating inclusive societies that benefit all generations. The ESU stands committed to fostering these essential changes and turning challenges into opportunities across Europe.

*Dubravka Šuica,
Vice-President of the
European Commission,
rightly identified
demographic change as:
“One of the ‘deepest-lying
challenges’ for European
societies.”*

The Congress

The Congress gathers every five years, serving as a pivotal event where the organisation establishes its fundamental principles and political agenda. Moreover, it provides a platform for statutory revisions. During this gathering, essential leadership roles, including the President and Vice-Presidents, are elected. Furthermore, upon the President's recommendation, the Congress selects a Secretary-General, who serves a five-year term.

Delegates participating in the Congress consist of members from the Executive Committee (ExCo) and representatives from national organisations.

It's worth noting that a new Congress is on the horizon, in April 2024 in Leuven. This upcoming Congress will play a pivotal role in electing the new President and Secretary-General of the ESU.



The Presidency

Hereby the composition of our motivated Presidency, as elected during our Sandanski Congress (2019).

President

An Hermans (BE)

Vice-Presidents

Nikolay Andreev (BG)

Heinz K. Becker (AT)

Antonios Demetriades (CY)

Manfred Hopfengärtner (GE)

Jozé Jurkovic (SLO)

Astrid Lulling (LU)

Leena Jääskeläinen (FI)

Lidmila Nemcova (CZ)

Gabriele Peus-Bispinck (DE)

Carmen Quintanilla Barba (ES)

Georg Männik *since 2022* (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)

Presidency meetings in 2023

12.01.2023 — VIDEO CONFERENCE

- Meeting calendar 2023
- Facilitating the ESU administration
- Creating contact with the new EPP- leadership
- Preparing the statutory ESU congress in 2024
- EPP working group 'Winter of Solidarity with Ukraine'
- ExCo on 24 January
- ExCo meeting on 6-7 March in Leuven
- Draft resolution on EU care strategy
- Ethical commission of EPP

06.03.2023 — LEUVEN (BELGIUM)

- Report of the President and the General Secretariat
- The ESU Resolution on the 'EU Care Strategy'
- The accounts 2022, the budget 2023, the membership fee 2023: proposal to the ExCo
- Summer Academy 2023
- Renewal of the ESU Presidency (2024)
- The ESU Congress 2024

10.07.2023 — LEUVEN (BELGIUM)

- 'Why Europe?' by Prof. Steven Van Hecke
- Report: 'Senior's representation in EPP partner parties'
- Report of the President and the Secretary-General
- Follow up of the ESU Resolution on the 'EU Care Strategy'
- Renewal of the ESU Presidency (2024)
- The ESU Congress 2024
- Meeting calendar 2023/2024

28.08.2023 — VIDEO CONFERENCE

- Report of the President and the Secretary-General
- The agenda includes an overview of all activities since the last meeting in July in Leuven
- ESU participation in the AGE task forces
- The European draft directive on the rules for drivers licence. Follow-up
- Preparation of the Congress
- Presidency - ExCo - Conference in Cyprus: 23-25 November 2023

23.11.2023 — NICOSIA (CYPRUS)

- Report of the President and the Secretary-General
- Cooperation CEP: stimulate University Research on Consumers' rights
- Participatory status Council of Europe
- European elections - EPP Manifesto
- EPP Congress Bucharest - March 2024
- ESU Statutory Congress - 9-10 April 2024 (Leuven-Belgium)
- Report on 'the search for a new ESU president'

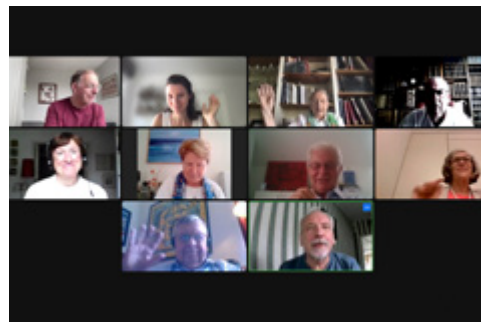
10.07.2023 — 'Why Europe?'
Presidency meeting with Prof. Steven Van Hecke

Presidency meetings hold significant weight in decision-making for internal ESU affairs and staying abreast of ongoing EU politics. A good illustration took place during the presidency meeting on July 10, 2023, themed 'Why Europe? – Presidency Meeting with Prof. Steven Van Hecke,' held in conjunction with the Summer Academy.

The discussions revolved around various key topics, including Teona Lavrelashvili's report on seniors' representation within EPP Partner Parties across ten countries, follow-ups on the ESU Resolution regarding the 'EU Care Strategy,' the ESU Presidency renewal for 2024, and the strategic planning for the 2024 ESU Congress. As a distinguished guest speaker, Professor Steven Van Hecke delved into current European challenges, the role of the EPP, and upcoming elections.

He particularly emphasised the significance of elections in Spain, the Netherlands and Poland, highlighted the NATO summit's importance, and shed light on the multifaceted dimensions of the Green Deal. Additionally, Van Hecke addressed demographic shifts and the evolving landscape of EU values, stressing the centrality of centre-right themes and the Green Deal's far-reaching implications. His impactful insights were further expounded upon in his newly released book, a thoughtful gift to ESU members present at the event.

For a comprehensive account, please visit our ESU website to access the full report: <http://esu-epp.eu/events/why-europe-presidency-meeting-with-prof-steven-van-hecke>



ESU Associations

Since its creation in 1995, the ESU has been the recognised senior's 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 des 'Engagés'
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
HUNGARY
Országos Nyugdíjas Polgári Egyesület
ITALY
SVP-Seniorenbewegung (Südtirol)
LITHUANIA
HU-LCD Senior Citizens Club
LUXEMBOURG
CSV-Senioren
MALTA
Assoċjazzjoni Penjonanti Anzjani Nazzjonalisti
THE NETHERLANDS
CDA Senioren

NORWAY

Senior Høyres Landsforbund

POLAND

Polska Unia Seniorów (PUS)
Parlamentarzystow Ruchu Ludowego

SLOVAKIA

Zdruzenie kresťanských seniorov Slovenska

SLOVENIA

Klub seniorjev in seniork pri SDS
Zveza seniorjev Nova Slovenija
Zveza upokojencev pri SLS

SPAIN

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 (UDC)

UKRAINE

Ukrainian Association of Retired Persons

EUROPE

Europäische Zentrum für Arbeitnehmerfragen

ESU representation within the EPP

The ESU, as an association of the EPP, actively engages in EPP activities and holds voting rights in EPP decision-making processes. In 2023, the EPP did not organise a Congress. Despite this, the party is involved in various activities to prepare for the 2024 EPP Election Congress. The ESU, led by Vice-President Heinz Becker, is actively participating in working groups tasked with preparing the EPP Election Manifesto.

During Political Assembly meetings, resolutions, statements, and research findings are discussed as foundational elements for shaping a comprehensive vision. An Hermans and Guido Dumon actively participate in these meetings, aiming to articulate the concerns of the senior generation and ensure the ESU's active integration within the EPP family.

For more information, please visit our website where details about events such as the meeting in Munich on May 4th can be found: <http://esu-epp.eu/events/%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8BEuropean-peoples-party-political-assembly-in-munich>



The Executive Committee



(1) <http://esu-epp.eu/events/a-new-eu-healthcare-strategy-video-conference-with-sirpa-pietikainen>

(2) <http://esu-epp.eu/events/1540>

(3) <http://esu-epp.eu/events/news-from-the-esu-associations-thoughts-and-experiences-to-share>

Meetings in 2023

24.01.2023 — VIDEO CONFERENCE

- ESU planning 2023
- 'The EU Care Strategy' Presentation and comments by Mrs Sirpa Pietikäinen (FI), MEP & Questions & Answers (see ESU website for the full report¹)
- The Draft ESU Resolution on 'The EU Care Strategy' – Presentation
- Decision making procedure

25.03.2023 — LEUVEN (BELGIUM)

- Discussion and adoption of the ESU Resolution: 'The New European Care Strategy: towards affordable quality care for all people who need it'
- 'An overview of the current challenges in Europe' – Steven Van Hecke,
- 'The living conditions of the Ukrainian people and how to support them'
- 'The EPP political strategy'
- 'The European Care Strategy'
- 'Opportunities and obstacles for the establishment of senior associations in European countries'
- ESU Application for Participatory Status for international NGOs with the Council of Europe
- Financial issues
- Upcoming events 2023
- News from our associations (see ESU Website for the full report of the ExCo meeting²)

13.07.2023 — LEUVEN (BELGIUM)

- News from the ESU associations
- Financial issues
- Preparing the new ESU mandate 2024-2029
- Meeting calendar 2023/2024 (see ESU Website for the full report of the ExCo meeting³)

23.11.2023 — NICOSIA (CYPRUS)

- Report of the President and the Secretary-General
- European elections & EPP Manifesto
- EPP Congress – 6-7 March 2024 (Bucharest)
- ESU Statutory Congress – 9-10 April 2024 (Leuven-Belgium)
- Report on 'the search for a new ESU president' (Heinz Becker)
- News from the associations

The European Seniors' Union Summer Academy, typically held in Vienna, took place exceptionally in Leuven this year. The three-day event focused on five key themes, each featuring expert speakers.



ESU Summer Academy



1. ESU's Visit to EPP Headquarters in Brussels

Members experienced a warm welcome at the EPP Headquarters, where Secretary-General Thanasis Bakolas extended a heartfelt greeting. The visit included an enlightening session led by Brigitte Grouwels, shedding light on Brussels' pivotal role as the epicentre of European affairs. The gathering served as a crucial avenue to not only strengthen camaraderie among ESU members but also gain comprehensive insights into the EPP's impactful role within the intricate landscape of European politics.

You can find the complete report on <http://esu-epp.eu/events/esus-visit-to-epp-headquarters-in-brussels>

2. 'Europe as a Task'

The second day of the Summer Academy delved into the overarching theme of 'Europe as a Task'. A visit to the European Commission provided invaluable first hand insights into the intricate workings of the EU, particularly within the Commission itself. The warmth of the reception at the Commission's visitor centre set the stage for an insightful and thought-provoking experience. Distinguished speakers, Marco la Marca and Gerrit De Bethuyne, graced the event, offering profound perspectives. La Marca meticulously navigated through the labyrinthine functioning of the European Commission, unravelling its indispensable role in shaping the European landscape. Meanwhile, De Bethuyne illuminated the audience about the critical significance of 'the European Semester' in moulding and refining European policies.

You can find the complete report on <http://esu-epp.eu/events/europe-as-a-task>

3. Europe as a Task & Challenges for the EU

The Summer Academy reconvened on July 12, 2023, hosted at the Provincial House of Flemish Brabant. ESU President An Hermans extended a gracious welcome, highlighting the central theme of the Academy, 'Europe as a task'. Hermans emphasised the imperative of inter-generational unity, drawing inspiration from historical figures like Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, and Václav Havel. The discourse focu-

sed on the European project's incremental progress, advocating for a 'Europe of values' rooted in a human-centred policy framework. Wouter Van Butsel, Head of CEDER, provided insights into CD&V's dedication to seniors, stressing the party's historical commitment and its broadened scope beyond healthcare to encompass broader societal inclusion for seniors. The much-awaited address by distinguished guest-speaker Herman Van Rompuy, the inaugural President of the European Council, resonated deeply. Van Rompuy's discourse encapsulated Europe's perpetual struggle with crises over the last 15 years, emphasising themes of democracy, migration, climate change, and security. His poignant message of hope, framing it as an actionable force, left an indelible impact on the audience. Marilyn Neven, from International IDEA, and Georg Männik, an ESU presidency member from Estonia, enriched the conversation, particularly emphasising democracy's global challenges amidst the rising tide of autocracy worldwide.

You can find the complete report on <http://esu-epp.eu/events/europe-as-a-task-challenges-for-the-eu>

4. Advancing a Human Rights-Based Approach to the Digital Environment

Patrick Penninckx, Head of the Information Society Department, took centre stage at the Leuven ESU Summer Academy themed 'Let's turn challenges into opportunities for all generations.' Penninckx eloquently articulated the imperative of ensuring a sustainable, people-centred, and human rights-based approach toward confronting the challenges posed by the digital realm. His discourse underscored the pivotal roles played by both the EU and the Council of Europe in navigating this complex landscape. The Reykjavik summit, a landmark event in May 2023, emerged as a focal point during the discussions. The summit's objectives, aimed at fortifying democracy, fostering legal cooperation, and addressing social and health concerns, took centre stage. A poignant realisation surfaced during the discussions, highlighting a pervasive lack of trust in politicians, rooted in concerns about both their trustworthiness and competence. The discussions were enriched further by the insights shared by Julia Wadoux from the AGE



ESU Summer Academy

platform Europe and Eline Chivot, a senior policy advisor for the EPP party. Wadoux passionately emphasised the positive aspects of ageing while urging concerted efforts to combat ageism. Chivot's emphasis on technology as a pivotal topic encompassed discussions around fairness, job creation, administrative efficiency, sustainability, privacy, data protection, and consent. The discussions underscored the EU's pivotal regulatory role in these multifaceted domains.

You can find the complete report on <http://esu-epp.eu/events/advancing-a-human-rights-based-approach-to-the-digital-environment>

5. Martens Centre Survey on 'Regaining the Middle Ground for the Centre Right' and Discussions

A highlight of the event was the unveiling of the new Martens Centre Survey on 'Regaining the Middle Ground for the Centre Right' by Tomi Huhtanen, the executive director of Martens Centre. The survey delved deep into comprehending the mindset of the European middle class, meticulously unravelling their concerns spanning economics, psychology, and security. Despite the palpable concerns, the survey showcased a persistent and significant level of trust in the European Union (EU). However, there emerged a discernible trend of growing distrust towards Russia within this demographic. The survey's discourse prompted critical reflections on the role of political parties as agents of change. Peter Hefele from the Wilfried Martens Centre and Kevin Maas, the former Secretary-General of YEPP, were active participants in these engaging discussions. Queries surfaced regarding the ideological positioning of political parties along the right/middle-right spectrum and the rationale behind the specific focus on the middle class.

You can find the complete report on <http://esu-epp.eu/events/martens-centre-survey-on-regaining-the-middle-ground-for-the-centre-right-and-discussions>

These sessions unfolded as comprehensive and engaging dialogues, providing a panoramic view of European politics, policy intricacies, and societal concerns. The platform facilitated rich discussions and perspectives from distinguished experts, allowing attendees to delve into multifaceted dimensions of contemporary European issues.



A diversity of ESU activities in 2023 - Some highlights

13-14.02.2023

Bergen (Norway) — Biennial national meeting of Høyre-Seniors

ESU President An Hermans and Secretary-General Guido Dumon were invited to the biennial national meeting of Høyre-Senior. Despite Norway not being a member state of the European Union, it is associated with the Union through its membership of the European Economic Area (EEA) and cooperates with the EU on foreign and security policy. The meeting included decision-making sessions, political issue information sessions, and statements on seniors' aspirations in society. Former Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg delivered an insightful speech, and An Hermans expressed her appreciation for the commitment of the Høyre seniors and their loyalty to ESU.

More information: <http://esu-epp.eu/events/biennial-national-meeting-of-hoyre-seniors>

24.03.2023

The ESU facilitated meeting between the Chairpersons of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Belgian and Romanian Parliaments

At the request of ESU President An Hermans, a meeting was convened between Els Van Hoof, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Belgian Chamber of Representatives, and Rozália Biró, President of the Women's Organisation of the EPP, as a side event of the ESU Executive Committee Meeting in Leuven. Discussions focused on Europe's foreign policy amidst geopolitical shifts, emphasising Russia's actions in Ukraine and its impact on political, economic, and societal levels, alongside concerns about Russian propaganda in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries. They also addressed Romania's challenges in joining the OECD and Schengen Area. Both parties highlighted the need for enhanced cooperation, especially in the context of upcoming elections amid significant geopolitical changes.

More information: <http://esu-epp.eu/events/ex-co-meeting-in-leuven-side-event>

25.03.2023

The EU's Care Strategy — Perspectives and Reflections of the ESU

The ESU Executive Committee Meeting focused on the European Care Strategy, welcoming the EU's adoption of the strategy to enhance care systems and support caregivers and recipients. The ESU prepared a resolution aligned with the European Commission's vision, addressing regional discrepancies and rural challenges. Discussions highlighted the historic significance of the EU's Care Strategy, addressing disparities in health policy across regions. The ESU resolution urged member states to utilise EU support for staff shortages and training. The discussions also emphasised the importance of EU enlargement and cooperation among member states. The ESU praised the European People's Party's role in developing the EU's Care Strategy and adopted a resolution, forwarding it to EPP leadership. The meeting included insights from Mr. Colin Scicluna, emphasising the EU Care Strategy's four principles and funding mechanisms, with a focus on rural areas and gender equality. ESU delegates actively engaged in discussions, providing valuable contributions for implementing the EU's Care Strategy. The ESU pledged to continue contributing to care policy debates at both EU and national levels.

More information: <http://esu-epp.eu/events/the-eus-care-strategy-perspectives-and-reflections-of-the-esu>



04.04.2023

**Bozen/ Bolzano — National meeting
'Generation 60+'**

An Hermans and Guido Dumon attended the national meeting of the SVP Seniors' Movement, now called 'Generation 60+', on 4 April 2023 in Bozen/Bolzano. The election congress saw the election of the new board and delegates of Generation 60+. The event had the simple motto 'Together', and the re-elected President Otto von Dellemann called for always looking ahead with optimism. ESU Presidency member Christine von Stefenelli was elected as vice-president. Our president called for continued cooperation and thanked the seniors for their engagement.

More information: <http://esu-epp.eu/events/national-meeting-generation-60-in-bozen-bolzano>

20.04.2023

**Maastricht — Symposium CD&V-senioren -
CDA senioren - ESU: 'Creating Dignity in the
Final Phase of Life'**

In April, the CD&V Seniors, CDA Seniors, and the European Seniors' Union organised a symposium on 'Creating Dignity in the Final Phase of Life'. Over 100 seniors gathered for a day of ethical reflection and discussions on end-of-life care. Diverse speakers, including Professor Wim Pinxten, Hans Kling, Professor Dr. Cor Spreeuwenberg, and Jos Aben, offered insights on this vital topic. President An Hermans highlighted the increasing need for palliative care, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasising its role in preserving human dignity. The event shed light on the importance of communication, planning, and sensitivity in end-of-life care, addressing physical, psychosocial, and spiritual needs. The European Seniors' Union committed to advocating for palliative care with the EU Commission. Brigitte Grauwels, former minister, concluded the day by stressing the significance of reflection and ethical considerations in providing dignity and quality of life for the terminally ill. This symposium provided valuable insights into the multifaceted aspects of end-of-life care and its societal impact.

More information: <http://esu-epp.eu/events/symposium-cdv-senioren-cda-senioren-european-seniors-union>



29.04.2023

**Online — The European Day of Solidarity
between Generations**

The European Day of Solidarity between Generations was launched in 2009 by the European Parliament and the European Commission as part of the European Year of Solidarity between Generations. Its aim is to raise awareness of the importance of intergenerational solidarity and to promote dialogue and cooperation between people of all ages. The day is celebrated every year on 29th April, and various events and activities are organised throughout Europe to highlight the contributions of different generations and to foster greater understanding and respect between them. Solidarity between generations is seen as a key factor in creating a more cohesive and sustainable society, and the European Day of Solidarity between Generations serves as a reminder of the need to work together across age groups to achieve common goals.

At the request of our colleagues in the Seniors Citizens Organisation of Cyprus, organising a common event with young people, President An Hermans has written a message which can be found on <http://esu-epp.eu/events/the-european-day-of-solidarity-between-generations-2>

“Solidarity is not only necessary in the public sphere to establish a fair and democratic society; it is also a dynamic principle that operates within our own personal lives, families, and living environments.”

— An Hermans

01.10.2023

Foini — The ESU joins UNIDOP celebrations in Cyprus

On October 1, 2023, our ESU President and Secretary-General joined in the UN International Day of Older Persons (UNIDOP) festivities in Cyprus. Alongside other NGOs, our senior citizens organisation of Cyprus (Oprepo) embarked on a heartwarming journey to Foini, a picturesque mountain village, where they organised a 'March of Love' involving both the younger and older generations. President Hermans extended her congratulations to the event organisers and underscored the imperative for both public and private initiatives to address the needs of our older citizens. She also made reference to her recent letter in honour of UNIDOP. In the company of Mrs. Marilena Evangelou, the deputy minister of social welfare, An Hermans expressed her hope for increased global awareness regarding the challenges associated with ageing. Together, they emphasised the importance of addressing this issue on a worldwide scale.

The complete version of the letter in honour of UNIDOP referenced by An Hermans is available on <http://esu-epp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Message-from-An-Hermans-on-the-UNIDOP.pdf>



22-23.11.2023

Nicosia — New perspectives about ageing better

The ESU and the Senior Citizens Organisation of Cyprus convened at the University of Nicosia's esteemed 'UNESCO' Amphitheatre. Prof. Constantinos N. Phellas led discussions exploring contemporary ageing characteristics. Prof. Steven Van Hecke and MEP Dr. Eleni Stavrou addressed EU priorities. Distinguished scientists shared insights with over 30 ESU delegates. Discussions revolved around implementing the 'European Care Strategy' and addressing demographic challenges highlighted by Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission. Key inquiries emerged: stimulating innovation, workforce enhancement, healthcare modernization, and social issues. Dealing with these issues through collaborative policymaking across all levels is crucial for navigating longevity's challenges.

More information: <http://esu-epp.eu/events/new-perspectives-about-ageing-better>

11.12.2023

Online — Brainstorm on 'Enhancing the Digital Skills of Seniors in the Slovak Republic'

We participated in an online brainstorming session, for which the European Seniors' Union was invited to discuss the project 'Enhancing the Digital Skills of Seniors in the Slovak Republic.' The primary aim of this project is to optimise digital literacy among seniors in Slovakia by developing lessons focused on digitalization for seniors.

More information: <http://esu-epp.eu/events/brainstorm-on-enhancing-the-digital-skills-of-seniors-in-the-slovak-republic>



For an inclusive society, based on a human rights approach

In the Annual Reports of our ESU and various national and local associations focused on older individuals, we often see a diverse range of activities. These span from gatherings and information sessions to critical discussions about ongoing political processes, all aimed at fostering engagement and participation for the senior generation. Within this diversity of activities, a shared aspiration emerges, which we aim to highlight in the following text.

Empowering Ageing Societies: ESU Initiatives and Beyond

Ageing, demographic shifts, and the prevalence of ageing societies have emerged as a prominent trend in the 21st century, already evident from the mid-20th century onwards. The concept of 'ageing societies' is a result of a growing number of individuals reaching an advanced age, accompanied by declining birth rates. Scientific research has shed light on shifting attitudes among older generations, dispelling stereotypes that presumed an inevitable decline with age. Notably, in 1982, the first World Assembly on Ageing was held in Vienna, bringing together Member States, specialised agencies, and concerned organisations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing marked the inception of international efforts on ageing, serving as a foundation for policies and actions promoting an inclusive society through a human rights approach. Subsequent plans followed suit.

Given the magnitude of demographic change, governments at all levels are compelled to address the challenges and opportunities arising from these shifts. An Hermans, the president of the European Seniors' Union, emphasises that society must be engaged in this endeavour. This includes a human rights approach, active involvement, and participation of older persons, who seek to be active contributors to policies that affect them. Their vision entails building an age-friendly, inclusive society where all generations can thrive.

Numerous associations for older persons have responded to this aspiration, empowering seniors, and their organisations. The ESU has taken on several initiatives in this regard. Below are some examples of the endeavours undertaken by the ESU.



1. European Seniors' Union: active partner in civil society



The ESU, known as the European Network of Seniors' Associations, is a vocal advocate and promoter of seniors' interests. Within the ESU's various meetings, including the presidium, general assembly, and regional conferences, a range of critical issues such as anti-discrimination, active ageing, social protection, inclusion, and the creation of an age-friendly environment take centre stage. The ESU is actively engaged with recent policy initiatives within the European Union, ensuring that relevant information is shared and a human rights approach is the cornerstone of daily political praxis. This involvement is particularly facilitated through the cooperation with the EPP.

2. Promoting awareness

The ESU is committed to promoting awareness about older persons' rights. Every year, the organisation 'celebrates' special moments and emphasises the idea of 'No ageism' and seniors' right to participate fully in all aspects of society. The ESU encourages all member associations to use it as a 'platform to share experiences'. Through collective efforts, a more inclusive and age-friendly society can be created, where the contributions of seniors are respected and valued in every sphere of life.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (June 15), the European Day for Cooperation between Generations (April 29), and the United Nations International Day of Older Persons (October 1 - UNIDOP) all hold significant importance in raising awareness about the well-being and rights of older individuals. Regularly, ESU-president An Hermans addresses in a letter to the member associations some aspects of the subject and invites member associations to shed light on this aspect of ageing in their own national or local living environment. Yearly examples can be found on the ESU website.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day sheds light on the issue of abuse of older people, a grave concern affecting many seniors worldwide. The day serves as a platform to educate society about recognizing and preventing various forms of abuse, such as neglect, financial exploitation,



and emotional mistreatment. By promoting awareness, we strive to create a safe and respectful environment for the older generation, fostering a culture of empathy and support.

The European Day for Cooperation between Generations emphasises the value of intergenerational relationships and cooperation. It encourages solidarity and understanding between different age groups, promoting an inclusive society where the knowledge and experience of older generations complement the energy and innovation of the younger ones. Through intergenerational initiatives, we can bridge gaps, reduce stereotypes, and build stronger communities.



The United Nations International Day of Older Persons celebrates the contributions of senior citizens to society. It advocates for their rights, dignity, and well-being. As the global population ages, this day reminds us of the importance of addressing the challenges faced by older persons and promoting policies that ensure their active participation and respect. Together, these awareness days remind us to honour and cherish older citizens, fostering a society that values their wisdom, experience, and unique perspectives. By standing united, we can create a more caring and inclusive world for all generations.



3. Lifelong learning for active citizenship

The ESU ensures valuable learning opportunities in every meeting through information sharing, experience exchanges, and discussions. Additionally, since 2009, the ESU, in collaboration with the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies (WMCES), the Österreichische Seniorenbund and Polak, has been organizing an annual 'Summer Academy' for leading figures in seniors' associations. For over a decade, this event was held in Vienna, but this year (2023), it took place in Leuven, Belgium, with Belgian partners.

The Summer Academy attracts distinguished speakers, making the event even more enriching and

insightful. Participants depart from the academy with a backpack full of newfound knowledge and inspiration, ready to share this knowledge back in their respective communities. This ensures that the impact of the Summer Academy extends far beyond the event itself, positively influencing seniors' associations and communities across Europe.

4. Seniors: active voices in decision-making

Promoting the active participation of seniors in all aspects of society, including politics and decision-making processes that directly affect them, is of utmost importance. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how stereotypes about seniors belittled and undermined the dignity of older individuals, sparking strong reactions against such attitudes. The ESU, too, called for treating seniors with dignity and encouraged initiatives fostering solidarity between younger and older generations.

Particularly, the focus on the 'inclusion' of seniors in the digital society gained significant attention. It became evident that digital literacy and participation in the digital environment were not a matter of personal choice, but rather a collective imperative for everyone to participate in the digital era. The ESU emphasised the need for seniors to be actively engaged in the digital world, ensuring that they do not get left behind and can fully benefit from the opportunities it presents.

In addition to its ongoing efforts, the ESU has collaborated with its members to develop crucial resolutions in recent years, addressing significant issues affecting seniors:

A. COVID-period Resolution: Titled 'Europe's Recovery; Building the future of fair and resilient societies – including all generations', the ESU called upon the EU to implement the valuable lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The resolution urges the EU to assume an effective and prominent role in leading the Common Strategy, tackling challenges in various domains, and instilling confidence in citizens that the EU, national, and regional governments, along with stakeholders at all levels, are working together cohesively. Recognizing the importance of addressing demographic changes, this resolution emphasizes building a fairer and more resilient society.

More information can be found at: <http://esu-epp.eu/events/europes-recovery-building-the-future-of-fair-and-resilient-societies-including-all-generations>

B. ESU Statement on Digital Inclusion: in alignment with this statement, the EU Council Department of Media and Information engaged ESU President An Hermans to prepare a comprehensive report dealing with age-related challenges in digitalization and exploring solutions to pressing concerns. The report, titled 'The digital era? Also my era! – Media and information literacy: a key to ensure seniors' rights to participate in the digital era,' is available in multiple languages on the Council of Europe's website. The ESU firmly advocates for the inclusion of older persons in today's information society.

If you want to use the text in your organisation, you can find the brochure at: <http://esu-epp.eu/events/launch-of-media-and-information-info-brochure-by-an-hermans>

C. Care Strategy Resolution: During discussions, ESU delegates highlighted the instrumental role played by the EPP in contributing to the development of the EU's Care Strategy. The resolution, titled 'The New European Care Strategy: towards affordable quality care for all people who need it,' emphasises the importance of providing accessible and high-quality care to all who require it.

You can find the complete resolution document at: http://esu-epp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/EN_ESU-Resolution-European-Care-Strategy_final.pdf

These resolutions reflect the ESU's commitment to advancing seniors' rights and ensuring their active participation in contemporary society, advocating for fairer and more inclusive policies and strategies.

D. Recently, the ESU and its member associations criticised the EU Commission's draft on driver's licences, citing concerns about elements of 'age discrimination.' On March 1, 2023, the European Commission unveiled its legislative proposal regarding driving licences—an area falling under EU jurisdiction. The primary objective is to facilitate unrestricted movement of people and goods

across the EU by modernising the driving licence system. This endeavour entails future-proofing driving licence regulations, enhancing road safety, and simplifying procedures for obtaining licences. The proposal includes provisions for supervised driving for young learners, a zero-tolerance approach to drunk driving, improved readiness for micro-mobility, the introduction of digital driving licences, and mandatory regular medical tests for drivers aged 70 and above.

Within the European Parliament, this legislative dossier was assigned to the Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN). The ESU and various seniors' associations have expressed criticism regarding the proposal concerning medical tests for individuals aged 70 and above. It's essential to note that the decision-making process is still ongoing, and final decisions have not been concluded yet. (Plenary voting: Scheduled for February or March 2024.)

European Seniors' Union granted Participatory Status with the Council of Europe

We are delighted to announce that as of October 22, 2023, the European Seniors' Union has been granted participatory status with the Council of Europe.

Our journey towards this achievement began in February 2022 when we submitted a request for participatory status. This process involved our Secretary-General, Guido Dumon, meticulously preparing a comprehensive list of documents showcasing the breadth of our activities. We have recently received confirmation of our status, marking a significant milestone for our organisation.

As we embark on this new mandate, we now face the pivotal task of determining how we will fulfil this role effectively.

Information Services and Communication Channels

The growing importance of digital literacy has become more tangible than ever in the COVID-19 period. With our small core team, we have therefore done everything possible to keep our organisation together by informing it of what is happening in front of and behind the (computer) screens. This not only concerns the workings of our organisation, 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. Do you want to share some news about your association? Contact us: esu@epp.eu.



Looking Ahead: Embracing the Future with Resolve

As we close the chapter on 2023, the ESU stands as a beacon of inspiration, a community of dedicated volunteers propelled by a shared commitment to shaping the destiny of European societies and enhancing the well-being of their fellow citizens. At the heart of our mission is the pursuit of a human rights approach in ageing policies, advocating relentlessly for the rights of older individuals across the entirety of their lives. Acting as vital intermediaries, our volunteers bridge the gap between national associations and European policymakers, empowering 'active citizenship' through education and political action.

Reflecting on the global landscape, the past year has presented both geopolitical challenges and opportunities. The conflict in Ukraine, originally a regional matter, has evolved into a broader geopolitical struggle between East and West. Additionally, the unprecedented Hamas attack against Israel on October 7 has underscored the emergence of a potentially perilous axis: Hamas/Hezbollah – Iran – Russia – China. These events have direct implications for European politics and societies, emphasising the urgent need for united democratic forces to safeguard our cherished values and principles.

Yet, amidst these pressing concerns, our focus extends beyond security to encompass economic recovery, the green transition, escalating migratory flows, and the imperative to address issues such as the rule of law, democracy, societal polarisation, and the erosion of trust in European politics. Looking to the future, our goals for the upcoming year revolve around championing the interests of European seniors and upholding the fundamental values of the European project: freedom, democracy, and solidarity. We remain attentive to the unique concerns of older individuals regarding digitalization, long-term care, and dignified ageing. Notably, the election of a new ESU President and Secretary-General in 2024 will mark a pivotal milestone in our organisational evolution.

Stepping boldly into the future, the ESU remains unwavering in its commitment to championing the rights and interests of European seniors, fostering intergenerational cooperation, and carving a path toward a society that is not only inclusive but also supportive for all. Together, let us navigate the challenges and seize the opportunities that lie ahead, forging a future that reflects the values we hold dear.

Warm regards,

An Hermans — ESU President
Guido Dumon — ESU Secretary-General

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