



## *EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)*

**ESU-Newsletter SENIOR INTERNATIONAL No. 151 (Engl.) 12th Sept. 2017**

### **Governing body of the EPP in Copenhagen**



*The ESU representatives – President em. Prof. Dr. An Hermans and General Secretary Guido Dumon - in Copenhagen, dedicated to the inclusion of older citizens in the political decision-making process*

The Political Assembly of the European People's Party dealt with the current political situation in Europe on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> September and discussed the next steps. The main focus of the debate by politicians from Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Belgium and other countries was: migration, security and agricultural policy. The representatives of EPP member parties from across Europe were concerned primarily with the special challenges that some countries, and Europe as a whole, are exposed to as a result of the migrant flows these days. The debate was led by the EPP deputy General Secretary, Christian Kremer. The EPP reaffirmed its goal of resolutely advocating the unconditional safeguarding of human rights and keeping the borders within the EU open.

A financial plan was adopted for an ad-hoc working group on current issues of the Common Agricultural Policy such as food safety, climate change, renewable energy and animal welfare. The representatives of the European Seniors' Union - President An Hermans and General Secretary Guido Dumon - raised the active role of many seniors in civil society in their countries and demanded their full inclusion in political decisions and actions. An Hermans called emphatically for the use of social media and other modern communication methods by older citizens. More necessary than ever - according to the President of the ESU – is that politicians foster direct, personal contact with them. “Seniors want their voice to be heard”.

### **Brussels: An Hermans sends condolences**

The leadership of the European Seniors' Union identified sympathetically with the victims and survivors of the terrorist attack in Spain. In a letter to the chair of the National Commission of Older Citizens of the Partido Popular and ESU vice-president, Carmen Quintanilla Barba (Madrid), and to the chair of the Catalanian Seniors' Association, Unio de la Gent Gran (UDC) (Barcelona), the ESU President expressed the deeply felt condolences of the ESU to the survivors and to the Spanish people. She condemned any use of force to achieve political objectives.



*Representatives of the two ESU member-associations from Spain at the beginning of July in Vienna with An Hermans, Dr. Marilies Flemming and Guido Dumon*

## Greece: Seniors of Nea Demokratia make demands

The guests of the ESU Summer Academy submitted a number of “country reports” (“SI” reported these in detail in No. 150). For Maria Kanellopoulou, honorary president of the ESU and chair of the Seniors' Association of the Nea Demokratia party, the causes of the crisis in Europe are self-made and therefore required a solution from Europe itself.

From the EU she demanded more efforts to provide financial facilities to its citizens and to safeguard their working and living conditions. She proposes a special fund for seniors whose home countries are caught in financial problems. In future, EU member-governments should not be allowed – as happened in Greece - that seniors be “emptied” as in a slaughterhouse, brought under the poverty line and with their meagre pensions have also to contribute to pay off the national debt. Europe is well-advised to be aware of its long and value-oriented history. “Europe must open its arms to all its “children” - without distinguishing between rich and poor, strong or weak, north or south.” This - as the honorary president states in conclusion - is “the path to maintaining and promoting the important values of Christianity as well as those of the European culture and mind-set”.



*“Family photo” of the ESU Summer Academy for Leaders in Vienna*

## **Berlin: stand up to Erdogan!**

The EU should not let itself be provoked by the Turkish President, stated Prof. Dr. Otto Wulf, chairman of the CDU Seniors' Union. In the face of continuing human rights violations and the prosecution of unwelcome critics, consideration should also be given to suspending EU accession negotiations. (according to Organiser press release of 21<sup>st</sup> August)

## **Neuzelle: monks return**

In Neuzelle in Brandenburg (DE), monastic life continues. After exactly 200 years, the first four Cistercian monks moved into the Catholic rectory. They came from the Holy Cross monastery in Austria. Among the new arrivals is its former Prior, Simeon Weste. In 1817, the last monks had to leave Neuzelle because the Prussian state had secularised the monastery. The monastery was founded already in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Catholic church in Neuzelle is considered as a "baroque wonder of Brandenburg". On the outskirts of the monastery grounds is a Protestant church, in which - according to a local television report – a monk will preach a sermon during an ecumenical service on the day of the Reformation anniversary (31<sup>st</sup> October). Both churches and their surroundings near the river Oder have undergone comprehensive renovation and/or garden design in recent years, which meets the highest standards.

## Potsdam: 25 years of the Seniors' Union

In the presence of prominent personalities of the Brandenburg CDU with Ingo Senftleben, and with its Seniors' Union with Ingo Hansen at its head, the Seniors' Union of Potsdam commemorated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 13<sup>th</sup> August. Its chairman, Dr. Friedrich Donepp, had invited the Editor of this newsletter, who in his speech voiced his opinion about the revival of the contacts of the CDU and the Brandenburg Seniors' Union with their Polish neighbours. He said also that the "Glienicker Brücke" between Potsdam and (West) Berlin deserved the epithet "bridge of unity".



*Attention is awoken in passers-by even today at this sign reminding of the fateful time of the Cold War in Europe.*

Quite the opposite during the DDR period, the sound of its name, together with the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, was for decades a distinctive symbol of Germany's division. Anyone who approached the bridge would face arrest.

On 13<sup>th</sup> August this year at the bridge, the CDU of Berlin and Brandenburg, with about 100 citizens, remembered the day of the building of the Wall 56 years ago, and reaffirmed their commitment to peace, freedom and the strengthening of democracy. The bridge spans the Havel and since 10<sup>th</sup> November 1989, can be crossed safely. It connects sites of UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage, and has become a tourist magnet.



*Glienicker Bridge, flanked by Baroque colonnades, was often the scene of agent exchanges between East and West*

## **Kraków: UNESCO extends the Heritage list**

At its 41st session, in mid-July, the UNESCO Committee added 21 places to the list of cultural and natural heritage sites in Kraków (Poland). These are, among others, the sub-arctic agricultural landscape of Kujataa (**Denmark**), the cave and ice-age art in the Swabian Jura (a mountain range in **Germany**), parts of the town of Taputapuatea (**French Polynesia**), as well as Venetian fortification systems in **Italy, Croatia** and **Montenegro**. The World Heritage status, confirmed in 1996, of the “Bauhaus and its sites in Weimar and Dessau” (**DE**) was extended by the construction of a school in Bernau near Berlin and five “Laubenganghäuser” (houses with balcony access) in Dessau-Rosslau. The decision about the cathedral in Naumburg (Saxony-Anhalt) has been postponed.

**Vienna** must consider the withdrawal of its status: at the Heumarkt, a 66m high residential tower is planned, which affects the appearance of the historic inner city according to UNESCO. The building may only have a maximum height of 43 m.

**Poland** was requested to stop immediately the deforestation of centuries-old trees in the ancient Bialowieza forest, part of which is a UNESCO Natural Heritage site. The EU brought a legal action before the European Court of Justice for the same reason.

## Seniors campaign for votes ...

### ... for parliaments in Norway, Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic

**The Norwegians** were called to elect a new parliament, the Storting, on 11<sup>th</sup> September. As the chairman of the Seniors' Association of the ruling conservative party Hoyre, Sverre Mauritzen reports, his members were committed to the continuation of the government led by Erna Solberg, to which the Progress Party also belongs. There are agreements with the Christian Democrats and the Liberals on cooperation. The probable election result could not be forecast, according to Mauritzen, whose Seniors' Association is a member of the ESU. In favour of a vote for Hoyre was its willingness for reform, as a result of which economic life recovered after the fall of the oil price. Today (12<sup>th</sup> September) it is clear that Hoyre, with 25 percents of the vote, can continue its responsibility in governing the country in future. Congratulations!

42 parties are campaigning for votes for the elections to the **German Bundestag** on 24<sup>th</sup> September. The following parties could enter Parliament: the Union (CDU and CSU), with their top candidate Dr. Angela Merkel, and the Social Democratic Party SPD under Martin Schulz (who have formed a government together since 2013), the Alliance 90/The Greens, The Left party, the Free Democrats FDP and - for the first time - the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany AfD. The Union is certain of the support of the Seniors of the CDU and CSU. Prof. Dr. Otto Wulff, chairman of the CDU Seniors, and other seniors' politicians are travelling as speakers to many areas of the country. Announced for the 15<sup>th</sup> September in Berlin is a lecture and discussion session with the deputy chairman Christa Thoben, Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Kruse and others on the topic "The Future of Age - Age in the Future".

**For the Austrian Parliament, the Nationalrat**, running for office with a chance of success on 15<sup>th</sup> October is the Social Democratic Party SPÖ and its present coalition partner, the Volkspartei ÖVP (top candidate: Foreign Minister and party chairman Sebastian Kurz), as well as the right-wing conservative Freedom Party FPÖ. The Austrian Seniors' Association ÖSB, chaired by Ingrid Korosec, supports the ÖVP's candidates. For the first time, two members of the ÖSB, the police general Karl Mahrer and the TU-Prof. Dr. Rudolf Taschner, have submitted applications for a seat in parliament. Gertrud Aubauer was no longer a candidate, but remained vice-chairman of the Seniors' Union. As the ÖSB celebrated its 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Vienna on 2<sup>nd</sup> September with 600 people, the top candidate of the ÖVP, Sebastian Kurz, was also there.

In the elections to the **parliament of the Czech Republic** on 20-21<sup>st</sup> October, seven parties are taking part. Two of them belong to the European People's Party (EPP): the traditional Christian and Democratic Union/Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-CSL) (chair: Pavel Bělobrádek), and the conservative Top 09 (Miroslav Kalousek). The ANO (Akce nespokojených občanů/Dissatisfied Citizens) party, founded in 2011 by Andrej Babis, told the journalist Hannah Illing (treffpunkteuropa.de) that a forecast "front seat" in the elections on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, would be "not good for Europe". The Christian Seniors of the Czech Republic,

SKS, who are members of the ESU and chaired by Dr. jur. Vaclav Roubal, see themselves as part of the KDU-CSL and support their candidates.



## South Tyrol shares its experiences

With a citizens' initiative under the title "Minority Safepack", the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP) wants to transmit good experiences with the safeguarding of minority rights to all relevant regions in Europe.

It is only natural for the seniors of the SVP to support these issues" said Christine von Stefenelli, ESU vice-president and deputy chairman of the SVP-Seniors, on the occasion of the signing of an appeal at a meeting with the chairman of the SVP Seniors, Otto von Dellemann (centre in photo) and Helmuth Renzler, likewise vice-chairman (left in photo).

In the Italian autonomous region of South Tyrol, the rights, granted and implemented to the German and Ladin-speaking citizens is an exemplary model.

## Belarus: human rights project launched

Three times a week, citizens from all parts of the country have the opportunity to turn with their concerns to the seniors' organization, "Nashe Pakalene/Our Generation", in the capital Minsk, writes Tatjana Zelko, a member of the ESU Executive Committee. For that purpose an office was opened in August. The new facility is used above all by elderly people who experience discrimination in their civic life because of their age. On the occasion of the International Day of Older Persons on 1<sup>st</sup> October, a hearing on the topic of the denial of human rights will be held for the first time.

### ESU Diary

**2017:** 28-30<sup>th</sup> Sept.: **Munich (DE):** " Safety and Confidence / Borders of the states and

the EU”

Organizer: Elke Garczyk

13<sup>th</sup> October: **Lefkosia/Nicosia (CY)**: Praesidium meeting

13-15<sup>th</sup> October: “Technology and Active Ageing”

Organiser: Antonios Demetriades

**2018** 27-28<sup>th</sup> April: **Aachen (DE)**: “Älter werden in der Euro-Region/ Becoming older  
in

the Euro-region “

Organiser: Dr. Gabriele Peus-Bispinck

7- 8<sup>th</sup> May: **Oslo (NO)**: “Intergenerational Solidarity”

Organiser: Sverre Mauritzen

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