



EUROPÄISCHE SENIOREN UNION (ESU)

EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)

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Austria has EU Council Presidency

Ingrid Korosec (ÖSB): EU needs determination and drive

Vienna/Brussels. Since 1st July, the Republic of Austria has exercised the EU Presidency. It followed Bulgaria, who held this position in the first half of 2018, and will hand over the baton to Romania on 1st January 2019. The President of the Austrian Seniors' Association (ÖSB), Ingrid Korosec, spoke at the 9th ESU Summer Academy about “major challenges facing the Austrian EU Council Presidency”, especially as “the cohesion of the EU is being challenged”.



ÖSB President and patroness of the Summer Academy Ingrid Korosec in her welcoming speech. Left, next to her: ESU President Prof. An Hermans and Deputy Director of POLAK, Halper; right, ÖSB General Secretary Heinz K. Becker and an ESU Vice-president.

Photo right: in talks with Dr. Bernhard Worms

The priorities of the Austrian EU Council Presidency are:

Financial framework for the years 2021-2027, negotiations about the exit of the United Kingdom, securing the external borders of the EU, reviewing and updating EU support programs, strengthening European identity.

Under the motto “A Europe that protects”, the EU Council Presidency is concerned with security and the fight against illegal migration, securing prosperity and competitiveness through digitalisation, as well as stability in the neighbourhood, which means the accession of the western Balkans / south-east Europe to the EU (according to Wikipedia).

In her newsletter, Ingrid Korosec described the Austrian EU Council Presidency “as the last opportunity before the European elections to work through a big agenda”. The result of this work will ultimately influence this ballot. “If the EU succeeds in showing determination and drive in solving the problems that lie ahead, not to argue, not to hesitate, but to make common decisions, then the citizens will adopt a correspondingly clear vote also. First and foremost, they will support those forces – above all the European People's Party (EPP) - which is the largest political group and stands for a clear European world view, for a partnership-based social order”, writes Ingrid Korosec. At the Political Academy of the new Austrian People's Party, the ÖSB President also welcomed all members of the Summer Academy as a member of the Executive Committee. She is already looking forward to 2019, when the ESU organises the 10th Summer Academy for Leaders at the same place, she said.

Europe's Demography: Challenge and opportunities

Report from the 9th Summer Academy for Leaders

VIENNA. (6th- 8th July). Anyone who can make it somehow possible as an ESU leader will attend the Summer Academy – knowing that it will get rid of their concerns and they will return deeply enriched. The explanation of political, economic and social contexts by prominent speakers and the description of the next route is as important to them as the family atmosphere – it proves to be a source of strength for political activity in the respective home country. Speaking for the indisposed Dr. Marilies Flemming, Vice-president Heinz Becker, Secretary General of the ÖSB and MEP, said to the delegates at the opening, “We have intergenerational competence and responsibility” and “you will go home a different person than you arrived.” He is right.



Wien-Meidling: the seminar-hotel in the grounds of the Springer-Schlössl, in which the hosting Political Academy of the Austrian People's Party has its headquarters.

ESU President em. Prof. An Hermans (BE) introduced the opening remarks of Marilies Flemming, the former Austrian Minister and current representative of the ESU in Working Group I of the European People's Party. “I have written to her that she will always be in our thoughts,” said An Hermans, and we look forward to celebrating with her together in 2019 “10 years of the Summer Academy”.

With warm words of appreciation, An Hermans remembered Simone Veil, who passed away on 30th June at the age of almost 90. As one of the few who had survived the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, she placed her whole further life in the service of peace and freedom. In 1979, when elections to the European Parliament were first held, she became its president. An Hermans expressed the hope and expectation that the work of this woman and many other peace-loving personalities of her generation will inspire the citizens of today to civic engagement according to their example.

Following on from the EU Summit of 30th June and 1st July, which highlighted the different views on asylum policies, the ESU President called for the preservation and development of founding ideas for a united Europe. The campaign to prepare for the European elections in May next year must address the needs of the population / voters: welfare, social progress, economic growth and a Europe that protects its citizens.



View in the hall – queuing for the coffee machine (picture foreground: Honorary President Maria Kanellopoulou and Elke Garzyk) – small talk

Summer Academy in key points

From the 6th to the 8th of July, ESU leaders from 19 countries gathered for the 9th Summer Academy for Leaders in the grounds of the Viennese Springer-Schlössl, where the Political Academy (POLAK) of the Austrian People's Party has its headquarters. Together with the Wilfried-Martens Centre for European Studies (WMCES), they made the meeting possible once again. Thanks also go to the Austrian Seniors' Association, the European People's Party, the European Parliament, the simultaneous interpreters Sabine Hübler (for English, photo below left) and Eva-Martina Strobl (for French, photo below right),



German participants in talks with the excellent interpreters.

also to Dr. Edeltraud Paul, Gertrud Pörtl (both ÖSB), Jolande Van Droogenbroek (ESU) and Mag. Johannes Spreitz (POLAK). The participants sent sincere wishes for the recovery of Dr. Marilies Flemming (ÖSB).

Politicians and researchers of both generations took the floor and facilitated a lively discussion that was of a high political level.

The conference was presented with a summary of over 20 country reports. In it, ESU member organisations and observers commented on their projects related to the 2019 European elections, which testify to their wealth of ideas and willingness to act.

The delegates were pleased to hear from the Hungarian Istvan Ivanics, who applied for membership of our organization for his Kovacs K. Zoltan Seniors' Association.

On the sidelines of the Summer Academy, meetings of the governing bodies – the Praesidium and the Executive Committee - took place.

Thanks to Edeltraud Paul, the participants saw the recently restored Art Nouveau church built by Otto Wagner "At the Steinhof", which rises on the heights of the current social-medicine centre. For the arduous ascent they were more than rewarded with a concert by a duo (soprano and zither virtuoso Stephan Ander).



Gertrud Pörtl (AT) and Dr. Milos Nemecek (SK) / An Hermans (BE) with Erika Reinhardt (DE)

To the general topic “Europe's Demography - from a challenge to innovative opportunities”

expressed first of all the deputy chairman of the host POLAK, Halper. Just as Sebastian Kurz introduced “a new style” in his ÖVP, the POLAK will also be addressing “new people, new topics and new ideas”, he said. The social changes planned by the new ÖVP-led government – among others, relief for families – find his support.

Heinz K. Becker considers the agreement of the EU states for the protection of external borders to be a success; he called for the strengthening of “Frontex” and opposed illegal immigration, which is rejected by the population. It would remain that those “threatened must be protected and accommodated”; their right to asylum should be decided in “centres”. The right to integration should be complemented by the duty to achieve it, according to Becker. For him, political stability in Europe and good neighbourliness – including the western Balkans, the Ukraine, Syria and the countries of North Africa – has no alternative. He sees the joint defence agreements as proof of the EU's capacity to act and its determination to “take its destiny in its own hands”. That is also the condition “for the preservation of the high social standards in Europe”, whereby Becker left open as to how the social security of the elderly especially in the eastern European countries can be achieved.

After this international digression, he devoted himself to the topic of the first session:

“Senior Economy” / “Silver Economy”.

Becker confirmed their “big dimension” and emphasised that the purchasing power of seniors is greater than that of other generations. Strong sales proved that. More and more older people used connected digital systems and started their own businesses (“start-ups”). This would have a positive influence in keeping the elderly in their usual home environment. With the statement “it is absolutely crucial that one is needed, is able to contribute and feel good”, he quoted as ÖSB Secretary General his boss **Ingrid Korosec**.

The media literacy of elders is also important for **Mag. Andreas Prenner**. The director of the Austrian Federation of Industry stated that “today many seniors feel younger and are travelling digitally” with positive effects for their mental and physical mobility and their well-being. He regretted that his country's economy was making too few seniors'-friendly offers, and called on his audience to engage in the development of new life-enhancing articles and services. These remarks were welcomed warmly by ESU President **An Hermans**, who spontaneously said: "we would be very happy about it!"

With **Mag. Sophia Psihoda MA**, a young woman took the floor. As a member of the Platform for Interdisciplinary Ageing Issues (ÖPIA), she spoke with a PowerPoint presentation on concepts for the support of older people (Vision AAL concepts of Ambient Assisted Living ...) (www.aalvision.at). She noted that “ageing should be seen as an interdisciplinary case” and that the independence of older people should be preserved as long as possible. She advocated the promotion of innovations in the field of technology that are appropriate to the needs of potential users. Also existing offers – e.g. public transport, travel offers, care and support - would have to meet the wishes and needs of each person. **Heinz Becker** commented: “As ESU we have to have an influence on this development.”



In the discussion, speaker **Franz Karl** (ÖSB) (picture above) described his positive experiences, which he and a friend – as he relied on the wheelchair – could collect on a trip to Cuba. Admittedly, the cost would have been more than twice that of a mobile passenger. As a result of Sophia's lecture, some listeners expressed their doubts about adequate dealings with elders – for example with hospital stays. “Technology is not everything”, it is said, “there is often a lack of personal attention” and “digitalisation is a job killer”, which led **Heinz Becker** to state that “technology cannot be developed over people's heads”. **An Hermans** commented on this topic: “Seniors must join in, also to advise young scientists and to take part in the decision-making processes.”

“Europe's political challenges” ...

... provided session No. 2 of the Summer Academy. **Prof. Steven Van Hecke** (BE) pointed out the stages of BREXIT that started with the vote of the electorate and have not ended even now. Although the exit date 29.3.2019 has been adhered to so far, and a transitional solution that is limited to December 2020 has been decided on, there are many unanswered questions. The future nature of the border between Northern Ireland (UK) and the Republic of Ireland

remaining in the EU remains unclear. (In the meantime, Prime Minister May has failed with her plans for a “soft Brexit” and has lost two ministers. According to recent press reports, the number of companies leaving the UK is increasing.) Van Hecke spoke in favour of close cooperation between France and Germany, also in view of the background of the new Italian government. He argued for Merkel's maxim, to talk about disputed issues with the states concerned – including Poland and Hungary – instead of rash judgements. It was important to avoid the impression that the EU was becoming a colonialist regime. Referring to the dead refugees in the Mediterranean (already 700 in 2018), he spoke of a great drama which must be ended quickly.

Responding to questions from **Claus Berend (DE)**, **Leif Hallberg (SE)**, **Prof. Nikolaj Andreev (BG)**, **Lidmila Nemcova (CZ)**, **Gabriele Peus-Bispinck (DE)** and **Joszeff Konc (Serbia)**, Van Hecke pointed out that the principle of unanimity was abolished in the 2017 European Council; moreover, he was convinced that “social Europe will reach the hearts again”.



*Dr. Vaclav Roubal (CZ) reminded that political action is a Christian responsibility.
In the picture foreground, from left to right: Guna Putnina (LV), Hermine Roth (DE),
Andrejs Rudzitis (LV), Roland Leek (SE)*

Concern about “the departure of some states from pluralism” was also made by **Vit Novotný** of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies. He was in favour of working with refugee source countries. He rates positively EU economic agreements with Japan (since signed), Australia and other countries as “examples of new forms of cooperation” for mutual benefit. The same applies to the strengthening of consumer rights, as the EU aspires to.

Leif Hallberg, Honorary president of the ESU from Sweden, asked him, “what does it mean when robots and machines take over more and more of our lives?” And in response the answer was: “People are social beings who do expect social communication and fear loneliness”. He doubts that they will be happier with digital media.

Vaclav Nemec (CZ) shared his concern with the remark: “Is there anything else besides work in life? Are we working to live or do we live to work?”

Lidmila Nemcova (CZ) advocated greater attention to social and ethical issues. In this connection, another participant called for the preservation and use of the Christian heritage. For **Novotný**, robots can be beneficial for single people, but they would have to be invented first and programmed to meet specific expectations. Body language would probably never be able to replace them, he concluded.

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What the seniors' Associations expect from the EPP and are planning ahead of the European elections was presented to the Academy participants by Secretary-General **Guido Dumon**

(BE). He referred to the reports that member organizations had sent in writing by 25th June. In the foreword to the booklet based on this, An Hermans and Guido Dumon conveyed thanks for their efforts.

The statements allow an insight into the situation of the national organisations and enable the exchange of experiences. Of particular importance to the Chair is external and internal security, combined with adequate responses to the refugee issue.

Leif Hallberg was so impressed by the statements that he strongly recommended his colleagues to read it. **Roland Leek**, ESU Vice-president from Sweden, wants from the EPP "publications that everyone understands".

At the opening of the 3rd session

“The ESU and the European elections”

Dara Murphy spoke as Vice-president of the EPP, and as campaign manager is currently travelling around the country. According to his observations, three aspects are particularly important for citizens and future voters: home security, a solution to migration-related problems and economic recovery – as a precondition for social benefits and prosperity. Murphy attaches great importance to EPP-affiliated associations, the ESU among them. He trusts that it defends with all its strength “what we have achieved in Europe in the last 60 years”. And to feel itself responsible for a high voter turnout.



From left to right: Christian Kremer, Dara Murphy (both EPP) and ESU-General Secretary Guido Dumon

For **Christian Kremer**, the EPP deputy Secretary-General, it is the ESU's combined life experience that makes it an important partner in the election campaign. He announced that, following the EPP Congress in Helsinki at the beginning of November, the election campaign programme will be developed from the position papers already available. The ESU was involved in the preparation and will present itself in Helsinki in a round-table discussion. Former ESU President **Dr. Bernhard Worms** (DE) argued that the electoral program should be limited to just a few topics “and to convey these messages convincingly”.

Once again: social media

The last day of the Academy was dedicated to two workshops about the importance of social media in the EU election campaign. **Matteo Albani** (EPP) considers this is “now the main source of information”. What is not “shared”, that is - forwarded – remains without reaction, stated the speaker for communication and marketing. That also applies to fake news. Social media are instruments, not a source of politics, according to Albani. He advises using multiple media and recommends that even unfriendly messages be answered. “Thanks to your Associations we can reach our voters,” he said. That this time (in Helsinki), six months before the date, a leading candidate of the EPP will be named for the European Commission, he sees as an advantage over previous elections.

Albani offered on-site training to seniors’ associations on how to use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram & co. Information at: ma@epp.eu.

From the Austrian election campaign of 2017, Sophie **Valtiner** (ÖVP) had learned that social media offered the fastest means of communication in order to bring the top candidate and his programme to the citizens. She recommends: “keep it short and simple! / be brief and understandable!”

Erika Reinhardt (DE) thanked the speakers for their encouragement to make greater use of social media and also to win over seniors. **Claus Bernhold** (DE), a member of the Executive Committee, advises his colleagues to dispel reservations about social media in their own ranks, because they are “easy to handle and important for cooperation”. **Leif Hallberg** said: “If we want to get involved, we have to move in the world of today; after all, we also want to persuade younger people of our policies.” He supports President An Hermans' plan to “form an ESU media group”. **Václav Nemeč** spoke of bad experiences with Facebook, of hacker attacks and insults, and referred to independent offers such as, for example, the Encyclicals of the Pope. **Barbara Fischer** (DE) admitted to reservations among the elderly.

In her concluding remarks, **ESU President Prof. An Hermans** thanked all those involved for their presence and involvement of all kinds. The Summer Academy had become a collaborative effort towards its tenth anniversary, she said. She trusted that the knowledge and experience gained in Vienna will be incorporated into political work at home.

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The ESU Praesidium

...in Vienna made a positive assessment about the regional conferences in Aachen and Vilnius, expressed appreciation for the honorary work of the President and Secretary General since July last year, focused on participation in the EPP Helsinki Electoral Conference, discussed the draft budget for 2018 and made decisions on the “payment behaviour of some member associations”.



Participants of the Praesidium meeting

The ESU will be present in Helsinki with voting delegates and guests. In the morning of 7th November, it will organise a round-table on “Seniors and Digital Media” in conjunction with its Finish member-Association, Kansallinen senioriliitto ry – President: Leena Jääskeläinen. In addition, the ESU is involved in talks with three EPP associations on the “New Social Contract for Europe”. For the evening of 6th November (6 pm) a meeting of the ESU Praesidium is planned.

After intensive discussion, the Praesidium decided to re-establish contact with defaulting Associations. This task will be taken over by the Vice-presidents. Reference was made specifically to the Statute (Articles 7 and 9). In the event that no payments continue to be made, the Associations concerned would be required to pay €100 per person per day to attend conferences and the 2019 Congress. They would be denied the right to vote and to stand for election.

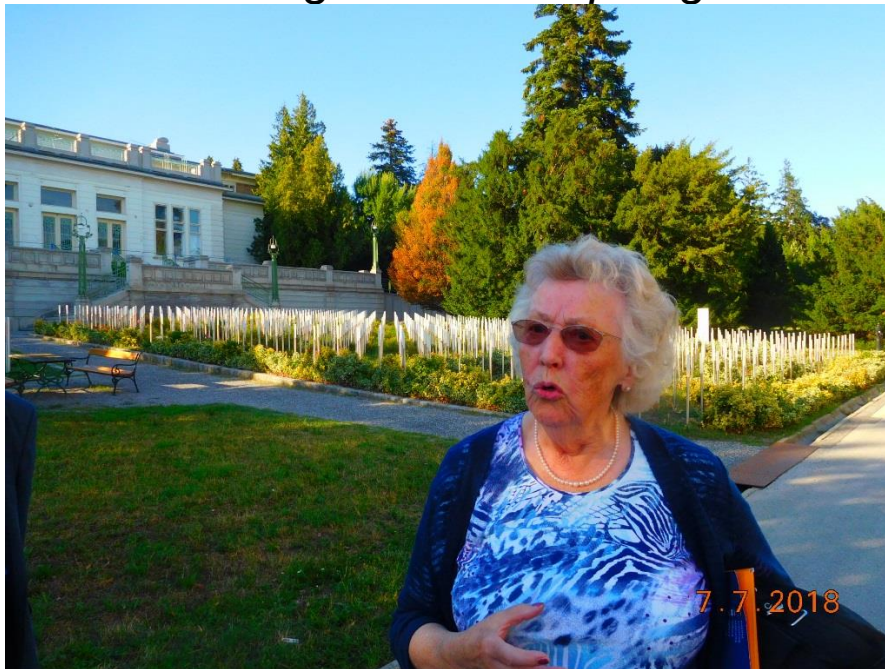
The ESU Executive Committee

..in Vienna commented on the recent regional conferences – as previously in the Praesidium - and the extensive activities report of the headquarters; approved the audit report of the 2017 accounts submitted by **Clode Carbon-Frisch** (LU) and, following a discussion, agreed the 2017 financial statements (treasurer **Etienne Vanderroost**), BE) and 2018 budget. The procedure for defaulting contributors proposed by the Praesidium was approved. With some relief, the members of the Executive Commerce heard that talks were being held in Brussels over the recruitment of a paid half-day job for the General Secretariat, particularly since the burden is increasing steadily. **Guido Dumon** presented the programme of the EPP Congress with the participation of the ESU.

The ESU is growing

Budapest/Vienna. On his journey from Hungary to Austria at the beginning of July, Ivanics Istvan had an application for the ESU in the suitcase. After handing over the document to Prof. Dr. An Hermans, he told the Editor: his organization, called Kovacs K. Zoltan Seniors' Association, was founded in 2014 and has about 100 members. It belongs to the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP), which is a member of the European People's Party. Istvan has been at the head of the Seniors' Association for a year, and now wants to be part of the ESU family. The contact was made via the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Budapest. The request for accession states that the Association shares "the fundamental values of the EPP and ESU and wishes to participate fully in the activities of the ESU". An Hermans promised a favourable examination of the request for membership. When she informed the Executive Committee of the application, the delegates rose spontaneously from their seats and applauded. Ivanics Istvan was accompanied to the Summer Academy by his colleague Tamas Szirmay.

Thoughtful and inspiring



Dr. Edeltraud Paul led the international guests to one of the heights that surround Vienna. The first stop in the evening excursion: the memorial to the 790 children and adolescents who were held by the then municipal psychiatric hospital for those "unworthy of life" and murdered between 1940 and 1945.

The "Kirche am Steinhof" in Art Nouveau style, built by the architect Otto Wagner for the inhabitants of the former "lunatic asylum" between 1904 and 1907, is in full glory after extensive refurbishment and is an excellent concert venue. The dome and figures on the facade are gilded, the facade is clad with marble slabs from Carrara. Wagner had adapted the interior design to the special needs of worshippers.



A highlight in the cultural city of Vienna: the church dedicated to Saint Leopold, one of the finest art nouveau-style constructed churches in the world

- End of the report about the Summer Academy –

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Margareta Pålsson (SE): Cross-border cooperation

Stockholm/Vilnius. At the ESU regional conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, from 17th to 19th May (SI reported in No. 162), Margareta Pålsson from the Moderate Seniors of Sweden and others said: “a country must never forget its seniors. We have long, accumulated knowledge, experience and can add value to our societies. More than 20 percent of the population in Sweden is older than 65”. Dialogue between the generations can help to overcome barriers between population groups, said Ms. Pålsson. Unfortunately, there is a significant number of older people living in poverty and isolation in Sweden. That is the reason why “we propose reducing the tax on pensions and support better healthcare and quality of life.” Only half of cancer patients receive treatment within the prescribed time-frame. In conclusion, the speaker stated: “we are not only Swedes, but also Europeans and citizens of a globalised society.” That requires cooperation, exchange of experience and mutual learning. “We note that similar challenges and problems can only be resolved with efficient cross-border cooperation. The Swedish delegation is therefore happy to attend this conference and to experience the discussions.”

Henryka Lechno (PL): Advocate for the needy!

Warsaw/Vilnius. The Warsaw and Mazovia group of the Polish Seniors' Union (PUS) has many social commitments. Henryka Lechno gave a brief account at the regional conference in Vilnius. She spoke of offers from her members to persons in financial, mental and physical distress, the mediation of knowledgeable legal advisors, and help for two families from the Königsberg area of Russia (formerly German north-east Prussia), who can now live in their Polish homeland. Then she said: "we participated in a public hearing to amend the electoral law - with the result that the legislature eventually refrained from the intention to exclude disabled people from voting." Members of their organization returned in March from a visit to the European Parliament with interesting insights, said Mrs Lechno. She is particularly interested in culture. Thus, discussions on literature, painting and current exhibitions are common. It is also reminded of personalities - living and already deceased - that are connected with cultural work.

An Hermans visited Warsaw

Warsaw. In early June, President An Hermans paid a short visit to the Polish Seniors' Union (PUS) in Warsaw. She was accompanied by Secretary General Guido Dumon. It was a friendly meeting, she told the Editor. The lively discussion touched upon the most diverse aspects of the life of the elderly in an integrated Europe and the role of the ESU. The meeting, to which President Janusz Marszalek and the chairman of the Warsaw/Mazovia group Katarzyna Bielinska, had invited them ended with a visit to the Palace of Culture. It allows a spectacular view of the modern face of the Polish capital.



The Polish metropolis from a rooftop. The guests from Brussels attended a conference of the Political Assembly of the EPP in Warsaw.

German Seniors' Day as an “experience exchange”

Dortmund. As part of the 12th German Seniors' Day, representatives of German and Polish seniors' associations and initiatives met for an exchange of experience and expert discussion. It was underpinned by the desire of the Polish participants for cooperation according to the example of the BAGSO (Federal Association of Seniors' Organizations) in Germany, which also organises the Senior Days,

Representing the ESU, Vice-presidents Gabriele Peus-Bispinck (DE) and Janusz Marszalek (PL) took part. The Chairperson of the Sejm Seniors' Committee, Malgorzata Zwiercan, and Bartlomiej Gluszak, Vice-president of the Association of Social Organisations in Poland, spoke about the most urgent concerns and expectations in the social field. This includes a reorganisation of the health service, which the government seems unable to cope with. Of concern is the large number of Polish nurses who work in Germany and who are lacking to establish effective care in their own country.

Prof. Dr. Dr. Roland Schöne introduced the Senior College at Chemnitz University of Technology. This is where the senior students work together under the Erasmus+ and Grundtvig programs. There are good contacts with several Polish universities.

The meeting ended with the intention to continue on the path to a BAGSO-like cooperation through further conferences and seminars. Both content and organisational issues will be discussed. *According to information from G.P-B.*



Malgorzata Zwiercan (centre in picture) with Dr. Gabriele Peus-Bispinck and Janusz Marszalek

Philipp Achammer: “No barriers at the Brenner!”

The participants of the ESU Summer Academy received a press release from the South Tyrolean People's Party, SVP, in which their chairman, Philipp Achammer, denies the need for new “controls and barriers” on the Austrian-Italian/South Tyrolean border at the “Brenner” Pass on 4th July. He advocates pan-European steps to protect the external borders of the EU; he does not care about national measures alone. Achammer warns European regulations on “secondary movement”, because it could not be “that you simply move on to the next country and start the whole procedure again, if you have received a negative asylum decision in one

country. Similar views were expressed in the discussion by Dr. Christine Gostner von Stefenelli, who is the deputy chair of the SVP Seniors' Association and ESU Vice-president.

After the editorial deadline:

Belarussian partners: no longer pensioners in poverty!

Minsk. At the initiative of the seniors' organization "Nashe Pokalene/Our Generation" (with observer status in the ESU), a working group has been set up in Belarus to fight poverty among retirees. As stated in an announcement on 14th July, the founding is the result of a round-table on "Legal Aspects of the Pension System in the country". It found that the current pension system is in conflict with the Constitution and the Madrid Ageing Plan of 2002, which does not see the reality in the country and needs to be corrected and adapted according to the perspective of Belarus.

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