



EUROPÄISCHE SENIOREN UNION (ESU)

EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)

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More attention for the rural population!

Versatile work of the Czech ESU Association

Prague. The Czech Christian Seniors' Organization (SKS) is participating in a project of EAPN Czech Republic aimed at helping seniors in small towns and villages. President **Lidmila Nemcova** reports: "big cities offer better services than small ones. A report has specified the weaknesses. It is proposed that in future, an authorised representative should take care of the concerns of the elderly in a number of small villages", because: "the quality of life of the elderly also depends on the support of local authorities. It's not just about material help, it's also about personal attention."



*ESU-Vice-presidents Lidmila Nemcova (CZ) and Janusz Marszalek (PL)
in discussion (photo from September 2018, in Bad Krynica)*

In addition, this year SKS was active in an EAPN project dedicated to combating poverty and social exclusion in **Latvia**. The SKS President also joined the Czech delegation traveling to Riga for this purpose. Thanks to the support of **Dr. Guna Putnina**, head of Latvia's Christian Democratic Seniors' Association, and of **Andrejs Rudzitis**, interesting panel discussions were held which served a better understanding of the situation in both countries. It was established that there are similar obstacles to overcome. Lidmila Nemcova hopes for a continuation of the relationship and states: "the situation of (the elderly citizen) is similar in all post-communist countries."

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To the delight of the SKS President, in November several members of her seniors' organization won a mandate in the Czech municipal elections in the local councils.

And finally, it says in the letter: "together with **Janusz Marszalek** (Poland), the screening of the new Polish film about the year 1968 was organised in the Polish Cultural Centre in Prague."

Sebastian Kurz: facilitate growing old with dignity

Austrian Federal Chancellor expresses himself in newsletter to the ÖSB

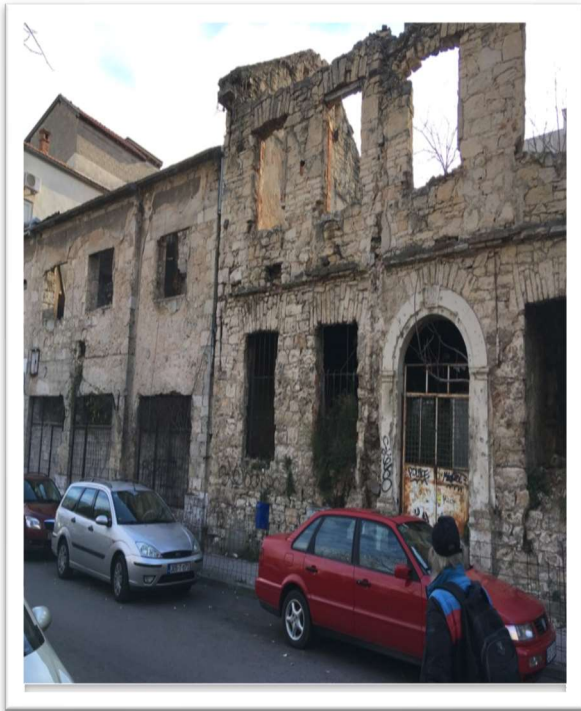
Vienna. "For the first time in many years, the pension will be increased significantly" writes Federal Chancellor Kurz in the newsletter of the seniors' association, which its President, **Ingrid Korosec**, distributes. In 2019, it will provide the largest increase of the past years, which will be well above the 2% inflation rate for small and medium retirement pensions. "People should get the appreciation they deserve for their lifelong work."

"A major issue, for which politics has yet to find a solution, is in the field of care," **Kurz** writes further. A reform is now being worked out to enable people to have "high-quality care and ageing in dignity". That the citizens are getting older is positive. Of course, that will lead to new challenges. The reform will therefore pay particular attention to the sustainable financing for care and for the training of qualified personnel. "Our aspiration is furthermore to enable people to live in their own home for as long as possible. This requires better support for family carers and caregivers," it concludes.

Longing for peace and prosperity

Impressions from a journey through the Western Balkan countries

Western Balkans region. If you visit Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Montenegro today, you will notice one thing above all else: a longing and striving for a peaceful life in freedom and prosperity is one of the most pressing concerns. Much more pronounced here than elsewhere in Europe, because the "Yugoslavia wars" (locally called the "homeland wars") of the '90s killed approximately 100,000 people, wiped out many families, caused huge material damage, adversely affected centuries of human relationships or completely destroyed them. The fact that things are now peaceful in the countries visited is a miracle after the mutual attacks and bombings. And all the more since there have always been different peoples, cultures, languages and religions here.



*War ruins – such as in Bosnian Mostar – are the exception.
In one place the destruction of the historic bridge is remembered.*

The “Stari Most” (“Old Bridge”) from the 16th century (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) over the river Neretva, rebuilt in 2004, is now an important link between the Christian (Catholic and Greek Orthodox) and Muslim, or respectively Croatian and Bosnian-influenced parts of the city. People visit each other, as they say. A 1993 plaque commemorates the destruction of the world-famous building on 9th November 25 years ago, presumably by the Croatian artillery.



The Mostar bridge – a symbol of the stirred-up quarrel and the reconciliation



In Dubrovnik, Croatia, a memorial commemorates the names of the 200 soldiers killed during those terrible times.

Here in Montenegro, the southernmost and smallest of the West Balkan countries visited, one pays with EURO; neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other hand, is not part of the Eurozone (currency: Convertible Mark of 100 Fening) or the EU, and while Croatia still has the Kuna as its currency, it has already achieved the desired goal of becoming a member of the EU. Montenegro is currently being granted the greatest opportunity to meet the European Union's admission criteria.

Up to now, the European Seniors' Union has a member association in Croatia with which, regrettably, there is no contact at present.

The Adriatic coast is rich in UNESCO World Heritage Sites and natural wonders, which are always worth a visit. For example, with RSD (Reise Service Deutschland - "*German travel service*"), which meets the needs of older citizens above all with its offers in the winter season, and secures jobs in the catering, hotel and tourism industries. RSD has the most important tourist attractions in its programme and provides knowledgeable and dedicated tour guides. Most booked hotels are accessible to the disabled.

"Power Woman" Marianne Thyssen

Brussels. European Commissioner Marianne Thyssen was honoured as an extraordinary political leader on 13th December as "*Woman in Power 2018*". She herself distinguished the city of Breda (NL) with the Access City Award 2019 for its ongoing efforts to provide accessibility for the disabled. 2nd and 3rd place went to Evreux (F) and

Gdynia (PL). 52 municipalities took part in the competition. 80 million disabled citizens live in Europe.

Congratulations from the President to Spain

Brussels/Madrid. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the democratic constitution of Spain, ESU President **An Hermans** congratulated the Vice-president in Madrid, **Carmen Quintanilla Barba**. The congratulations also relate to her initiative to use the event as occasion for a congress of the rural women's organisation, Afammer. This Association has about 180,000 members. The President regrets that she could not take up the invitation.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Spain, which entered into force on 29th December 1978, states in Article 1 (1): "Spain is established as a social and democratic State, subject to the rule of law, and advocates as the highest values of its legal order the following: liberty, justice, equality and political pluralism." (Quoted from WIKIPEDIA)

Now also for the victims of Strasbourg



*In December, two years ago, the Islamist terrorist Amri raced to a Christmas market in Berlin. Hardly had the floral greeting from our ESU been laid in memory of the victims and their families at the Gedächtniskirche when the terrible news arrived about another act of terrorism - for the third time this year in France! The assassin in Strasbourg killed at least four people and left many injured. From now on, our flowers will be meant also for **these** innocent victims.*

The latest incident has renewed the discussion about better coordination between security agencies, especially between neighbouring states. The assassin from Strasbourg was a Frenchman of Morocco descent and a graduate of several prison sentences.

Congratulations to Marilies Flemming on her 85th birthday on 16th December

The Viennese lady has been the “soul” of the ESU Summer Academies in her city for almost ten years; she is valued as a committed member of Working Group I of the European People's Party, and is a senior officer of the Austrian Seniors' Association who often speaks “in plain language” when others bite their tongue.



The jubilee lady with the ESU President (taken in 2017)

To her countrymen (and women), Dr. Flemming is also held in good memory as a Federal Minister. In discussions everywhere, the lively Austrian brings the necessary momentum and never tires of calling on and professing Jesus Christ as a great inspiration for our time.

Congratulations, dear Marilies !

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*The Editor wishes all the friends of this Newsletter a
BLESSED CHRISTMAS !*

IMPRESSUM

Editor: ulrich.winz@web.de; Mobile telephone: + 49 (0)174 175 60 50

translated by Margit & Seán Hawkes

European Seniors' Union (ESU): 1000 Brussels, Rue de Commerce/Handelsstraat 10;
Tel.: +32 2309 2866; Internet: <http://esu-epp.eu> Facebook.com/esu-eu
E-Mail: esu@epp.eu Twitter: esu_epp