



# *EUROPÄISCHE SENIOREN UNION (ESU)*

## *EUROPEAN SENIORS' UNION (ESU)*

*Newsletter SENIOR INTERNATIONAL Issue. No. 170 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019*

### *“South Tyrol in Europe – Analysis and Challenge”*

*Impressions from a Regional Conference in the  
Autonomous Province of Bozen*

**Bozen/Bolzano (South Tyrol/Italy).** For the first time, the European Seniors' Union (ESU) held an international conference in the Autonomous Province of Bozen/ South Tyrol/ Alto Adige.



*A poster indicates to delegates from eleven member-organizations the way to their conference venues: SVP headquarters, state parliament, Mercantile House, rock-cave cellars and the House of Youth. The provincial centre of Bozen - here the railway station square - celebrated the beginning of spring for a week of markets, fun and games for old and young*

Politically interested and active South Tyroleans met here from 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> March with guests from eight other countries and eleven ESU member-organisations. Invited by the ESU and

seniors from the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP), they explored the question of which place the region occupies in its own country and how it can resonate with Europe.



*At the headquarters of the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP), politicians from the region meet with ESU President An Hermans (2<sup>nd</sup> from right). In the picture are the following (from left): Otto von Delleman, Dr. Luis Durnwalder, Dr. Christine von Stefenelli, senior Senator Karl Ferrari and Philipp Achammer*

Speakers from several aspects of life devoted themselves to the situation of minorities in northern Italy and the expectations for the future of an integrated Europe. The general theme, venue and date were chosen wisely. Nine weeks before the important and decisive elections to the European Parliament, the most urgent tasks of the coming months should be analysed and focused on.

### **“Being united in diversity”**

“Europe is impressive due to its diversity,” say its citizens, and many people from elsewhere see it similarly. That is a cause for joy. But the conference made it clear that in times of trouble this assessment is not enough. The danger, the much-vaunted “diversity” is also a reality to use for divergent policies. For example, for the argument that - even in very important areas - national awareness, national pride, should have priority. Often the distant “Brussels” must serve as a scapegoat.

In the memory of politicians of this complexion, it seems that the causes of the devastating wars since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century have no place (anymore). It is precisely the departure from the strategy of “my country first”, that has preserved lasting peace for Europeans since the late 1940s, with the exception of the Western Balkans and, more recently, the Ukrainians. Thus joining forces at a higher level, at a European level, has proved beneficial. This insight, this conviction shaped the Bozen conference, and demands new ideas and actions.

The ESU member-associations are committed to doing so. The priority given to participation in the electoral campaign this spring is: the higher the number of voters, the greater the chance

of success for EPP candidates in the European Parliament. The EPP-family is determined to continue its policy of peace, democracy and freedom beyond 2019 by driving new premisses forward. The conference encouraged European Parliament member, Dr. Herbert Dorfmann (South Tyrol) to his new candidacy and wished Ondrej Tunega (Slovakia) every success for his first application.

### Candidates for the European Parliament



*Bozen was a good opportunity for ESU President Prof. An Herman for talks with the candidates for the European Parliament: Herbert Dorfmann (South Tyrol, left) and Ondrej Tunega (Slovakia)*

### To the speeches

The ESU President, **em. Prof. Dr. Hermans** (B) thanked her deputy **Dr. Christine von Stefenelli** for the implementation and preparation of the meeting. As a participant in the discussion and decision of the EPP from the speech about the final jointly-agreed suspension of the Hungarian party FIDESZ, the President invoked the formative Europe values. These are to be respected and defended. They are also the compass of the ESU.

Dr. Christine von Stefenelli was extremely pleased to have the opportunity to share the experiences of South Tyrol, especially in minority politics, with delegates from abroad. SVP chairman **Philipp Achammer** elaborated on this: South Tyrol is a prime example of how decisions about repositioning borders (in this case 1919) can be made in the interests of all sections of the population - and decisions must be made! Three ethnic groups are settled here, have the same rights, live well together. German is spoken by 70 percent of South Tyrol, Italian by 25 percent and Ladin by 5 percent (in 8 districts).

This assessment of the SVP-Obmann (chairman of the South Tyrolean People's Party) and Landesrats (ministers), is shared by the chairman of the SVP Seniors, **Otto von Dellemann**, and the state governor **Dr. Arno Kompatscher**. They are unanimous in agreeing that the



Autonomous Province of South Tyrol is a “small Europe in Europe.” Achammer said: “controls at the Brenner Pass must not happen again!” and: “A free Europe is the solution to our problems.” For this purpose there are other European regulations to guarantee internal and external security, the politician recommended. This was not only the opinion of younger people, among which he (still) counted himself.

The exact same line was taken by **Dr. Bernhard Worms (D)**, who stood at the head of the ESU from 2001 to 2013. He does not want to resign himself to the fact that “Europe remains a major construction site.” In the face of many political problems and the uncertain outcome of the election on 26<sup>th</sup> May, the commitment of every citizen has great significance. From Christian responsibility, he asked: “Europeans, where are YOU? What have YOU already done for Europe today?” For him, achievements such as parliamentarism, party democracy, the rule of law and the social market economy remain immovable pillars of the “House of Europe.” Dr. Worms considers that conflict resolution is only effective at the conference table and the application of subsidiarity is indispensable “wherever it appears possible and sensible”.



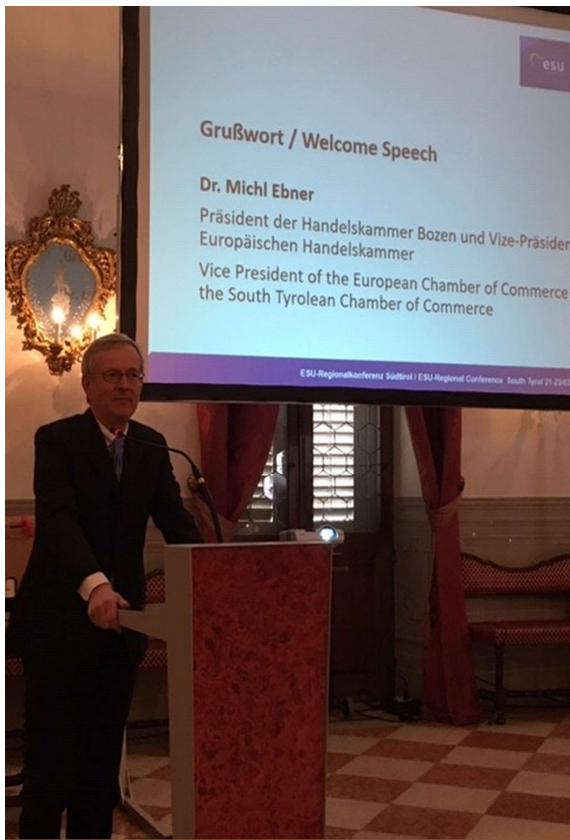
*Chance meeting in the old town of Bozen on the way to the conference venue.  
From left: Dr. Bernhard Worms, Claus Bernhold and Peter Grab (all DE),  
Dr. von Stefenelli and Bishop Dr. Ivo Muser (South Tyrol)*

The solidarity of peaceful people also appealed to **Dr. Ivo Muser**, the Bishop of the Diocese of Bozen-Brixen. With reference to Paul's words in the Letter to the Galatians, he urged elders in society to link their memories of war, distress and suffering with hope for later-born generations. Reflection does not mean “constantly licking old wounds”, but to reflect on what is necessary, on shaping the future - in full respect for “the other” and in a desire for reconciliation. That is the Christian duty. Europe should no longer be defined by prices, but should raise its acceptance as a community of values.

If anyone can explain enthusiastically through his own experience and actions, the path of South Tyrol from a poor area to a wealthy region that is **Dr. Luis Durnwalder**.

He, the former provincial governor, was also gained as a patron of the conference by Dr. Christine von Stefenelli. What the European institutions are called upon to do, namely to secure

and increase prosperity, he sees as a mandate for action for the politicians of his region. In accordance he proceeded during the years of tough struggle against various resistances. Such was the Autonomy Agreement signed by De Gasperi and Gruber in 1946



*President of the Chamber of Commerce, Michl Ebner speaks to the guests in the listed Mercantile building. It was temporarily the seat of the Commercial Court of Bozen.*

to be implemented not only in urban centres, but also in rural areas. That's why he provided, among other things, a connection to every farmhouse around the Alps. He built roads and supply lines of all kinds. Thereby, the economic existence of the mountain farmers was secured, the neglect of their properties was put an end too, and this counteracted the threat of emigration to the valleys. Non-agricultural jobs should not be more than 25 km away.

Since then, every year tens of thousands of tourists from all over Europe have been raving about the neat and tidy look of the farms on the slopes!

For the South Tyrolean ethnic groups, it is "from being one against another through a coexistence to being for one another", the politician emphasised. And problems that would always arise are no stronger than those between two Alpine valleys, he added with a wink. True to his assessment "we are so strong that we also have to take responsibility in Europe," Dr. Durnwalder, a consultant and advisor in matters of "minority protection" is much in demand and frequently on the road.

The ethnic and linguistic range is also reflected in the composition of the state parliament, as its Member of Parliament **Helmuth Renzler** informed the visit of the conference participants. Like Christine von Stefenelli, he is vice-chairman of the SVP- Seniors.



*The foreign conference participants listen to explanations  
in the parliament of the Province of Bozen - South Tyrol*

Other speakers devoted themselves to economic and social aspects. With pride **Dr. Michl Ebner**, in the Mercantile building - a protected historic monument, referred to the first Bozner goods fair for the year 1202 being documented. Four times a year, traders from near and far met here. As President of the Chamber of Commerce and Vice-President of the European Chamber of Commerce, he hopes that the "tremendous European peace project" will remain more than "a project of immigration" and will increase its impact on other continents.

South Tyrol is already sending out a positive signal with its economic power: **Dr. Georg Lun**, Director of the Chamber of Commerce, describes the region as the richest in Italy; its gross domestic product (GDP) per person at €42,600 is above the European average, it is gaining in popularity due to full employment, and the Brenner Base Tunnel (opening 2028) promises substantial improvements in transit traffic. Dr. Lun is certain that the agriculturally-oriented products (apples, wine), the mechanical engineering focused on local needs (snow cannons, cable cars) and the flourishing tourism industry need a free Europe just as much as Europe needs a strong South Tyrol.

In this matter he was supported by, among others **Dr. Hansi Pichler**, the president of "IDM Südtirol" ("Innovation, Development, Marketing"), who explained his activities to the conference participants.

In order to promote the good development of the autonomous region to mutual advantage, a series of decisions at European level are needed, observed **Dr. Herbert Dorfmann**, who is again running for the European Parliament. "Europe was for a long time not in solidarity with Italy, where the refugee ships arrived," said Dorfmann regretfully. He sees here a connection with the strengthened nationalism / skepticism in Italy, a country that was one of the founding members of today's European Union. For him, 2019 is a "year of upheaval in the European Union".





*Lecture session in the House of Youth, moderated by Sonja Plank, the chairman of the SVP youth. On the podium from left to right: Marc Röggl, Gretl Niederwieser Wörndle, Diocesan Bishop Ivo Muser, Dr. Bernhard Worms, Mag. Florian Gasser*



*Landesrätin(Minister) Dr.Waltraud Deeg, Dr. Christine von Stefenelli and Otto von Dellemann*

For **Professor Marjaana Gunkel** from the University of Bozen, the promising leadership of different generations in the companies is a prerequisite for the working atmosphere and the success of the company. Studies have shown that attitudes to work have changed significantly in recent decades, and business leaders have to respond. Young people are very interested in job security despite new working hours and job models.

The benefits that the atmosphere in the company can have for all sides was explained by the entrepreneur **Heiner Oberrauch**, managing director of the sporting goods company SALEWA. Thanks to an exceptionally friendly working atmosphere, the export company binds its 1,200 employees, which is currently of particular importance. Bonuses for young mothers and for employees who come by bike, as well as the admission of 20 refugee families are three benefits that speak for the reputation of the company.

The senior manager pushes the question: "what have YOU done, when thousands of refugees drowned in the Mediterranean?" And once more: "what do I do with my life?" The answer is given by the boss himself: practicing humanity, sustainable production, think globally and act, preserve the creation! And: do not overlook people when using social media!



*In the 1<sup>st</sup> row (from left), the ESU Vice-Presidents Gabriele Peus-Bispinck (D) and An Räämet (EST), as well as the candidate for the EU Parliament, Ondrej Tunega (SK)*

**Dr. Ulrich Höllrigl**, managing director of the "Platform Land", an alliance of initiatives dedicated to rural areas explained about another success story. Founded four years ago, employees are concerned with "digital highways" and the intelligent and thus economical use of space: retirement homes will be set up in place of unused buildings in the village centre. Next, the construction of houses for several generations will be managed.

The "Light for Seniors" Association, chaired by **Karl Pichler**, organises visits to lonely, withdrawn, shy citizens - primarily in the countryside - and offers them help and to bring "light" in their lives. These are, for example, joint birthday parties and concerts in Bozen und Brixen.





*Karl Pichler*

Announcing the topic "Europe is becoming forgetful", **Dr. Christian Wenter**, head of Geriatrics at the Meran Hospital, spoke mainly about the concern for Alzheimer's patients. He stressed the right of every citizen suspected of dementia to a diagnosis, that in half of the cases resulted in an age-related forgetfulness being diagnosed, and not just dementia. If any suspicion is confirmed, then each person must receive the best possible treatment. In Italy, there are excellent prerequisites for this. This also includes temporary relief for family care-givers. The doctor demanded the "highest priority" from politicians for this problem.

**Guido Dumon** (B), Secretary-General of the ESU, felt encouraged by this statement to recommend appropriate initiatives to conference participants after their return. "Demand from your party leaders that they work for dementia patients to the same extent as for cancer patients!" said Dumon.

Landesrätin (Ministerin) **Dr. Waltraud Deeg** endorsed a statement by Pope Francis in her work for seniors. He had stated that in a society where seniors are not valued, youth has no future. She lists what has been achieved: many opportunities for participation in social life, a lively neighbourhood help, "days for seniors" with cultural offerings and the payment of care allowances (between 561 and 1,800 €). The Minister made it clear that for good care, immigrants are also needed.

Coming from the Austrian province of Tyrol, **Helmut Kitzinger**, regional chairman of the Tyrolean Seniors' Federation, urged the elders about more self-confidence. His credo: "seniors are a strong backbone of society. But: we have also to open our mouths and say that out loud!"

The Innsbrucker cultivates good contacts with the seniors of the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP). Mutual invitations are common practice.

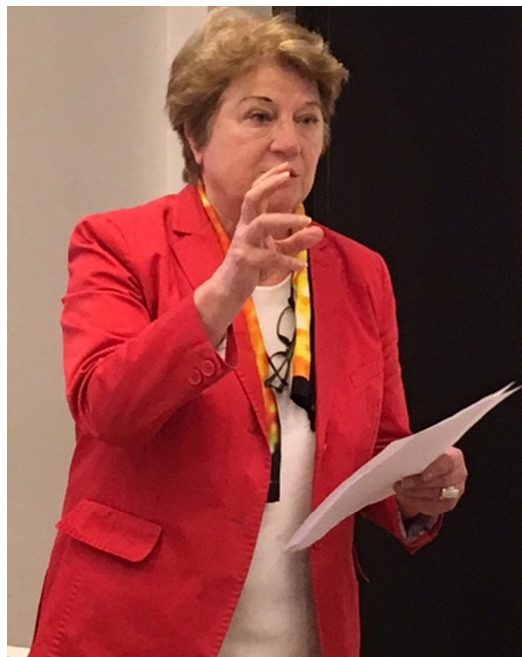
Once again, **Otto von Dellemann** took the floor - this time as president of the cooperative "Wohnen im Alter" ("*housing for the elderly*"), which draws together and promotes the offers of various organisations. Founded in 2016, "Wohnen im Alter" has 13 members currently and is part of the project "Fair Care." "Wohnen im Alter" is supported by the EU and the Italian government. Great importance is attached to the promotion of volunteer work.

**Gretl Niederwieser Wörndle**, the founder of the "Advisory Council for Seniors and Solidarity between the Generations" (in short: the Seniors' Council of the SVP) was invited. She was asked to recall the beginnings dating back to the year 1993. At that time, she was a candidate for the election to the South Tyrolean state parliament and became more aware of the concerns in the social area, which led her to political action. She focused her attention in the field of care and poverty in old age. She achieved, together with many colleagues, a recognition of years of education for the pension calculation.

**Mag. Florian Gasser**, doctoral candidate at the University of St. Gallen (Switzerland), gave an overview of the behaviour of citizens in elections to the European Parliament.

From **Marc Röggl**, the secretary-general of MIDAS, the guests learned about the influence of his organisation. The abbreviation stands for the "European Association of Newspapers in Minority and Regional Languages." Representing 27 members in 13 countries and 12 languages, the organisation is based in Bozen. It promotes minority-friendly legislation, organises the exchange of experiences and press articles and awards two prizes.

In the concluding, very limited discussion, Janusz Marszalek (PL), Claus Bernhold (D), Joze Jurkovic and Anton Bogataj (both SLO), Ondrej Tunega (SK), as well as Andreas Nicolaou (CY) took part, in addition to the speakers.



*President An Hermans during her closing address*

At the end of the three-day conference, the President of the ESU, **Prof. Dr. An Hermans**, referred once again to the decision to suspend FIDESZ from the EPP. This was done with great responsibility. She thanked Christine von Stefenelli and her team for the success of the conference, which gave further impetus to the hot phase of the election campaign.

## Excursions

### The Provincial Winery

The impressive balance of political, economic and social activities for the benefit of the South Tyroleans was complemented by a visit to the "Laimburg" provincial winery in Auer. It is a facility where all aspects of traditional viticulture are studied scientifically. Thousands of bottles and hundreds of barrels of wine are stored in cellars cut into rock.

### The Ötzi

In the Archaeological Museum of Bozen, foreign guests paid a visit to the mummy of the "Ötzi", a man found by chance in 1991 in the Ötztal Alps (only around 90 m from the border with Austria), who lived about 5,300 years ago. His body and the well-preserved items of equipment provide a good insight into the life of the alpine dwellers of that time.

### The landmark

During a guided city tour in Bozen with Dr. Petra Überbacher, interested visitors saw the Cathedral of the Assumption with its frescoes from the mid-14th century. The church is Bozen's landmark, a gem of Romanesque and Gothic architecture with southern and northern influences, and is also considered the first Gothic hall church in the history of architecture.



*The charming leader of the tourist guides in South Tyrol draws attention to a panel in front of the portal of Bozen cathedral (picture above left), at the touch of which blind children were supposed to have their eyesight restored. (photo of the church: WIKIPEDIA)*



*GESEGNETE OSTERN! HAPPY EASTER!*  
*JOYEUSES PÂQUES! WESOLEGO ALLELUJA !*

**IMPRESSUM**

**Editor:** [ulrich.winz@web.de](mailto: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](https://www.facebook.com/esu-eu)  
E-Mail: [esu@epp.eu](mailto:esu@epp.eu) Twitter: [esu\\_epp](https://twitter.com/esu_epp)