

Dear Friends,

For the third time we organised a videoconference, given these COVID-19 times it was the only opportunity to meet. With our latest conference we certainly achieved 'a star': exceptionally good speakers, simultaneous translation into English and German and... appreciative words from the EPP secretary general Antonio Lopez for the functioning of the ESU. I would like to extend this appreciation to all senior citizens in our member associations who are actively committed to the well-being of their fellow citizens, the strengthening of an inclusive society and intergenerational solidarity.

Many of you have not forgotten: 7 November 2020: the 25th anniversary of the ESU - which we hope to celebrate together. It was remarkable to me how many of you have linked the importance of the ESU to the preservation and promotion of the fundamental pillars of Europe: peace, democracy, the rule of law, human dignity. In their personal histories, the older generations have shared those values and built Europe. We know that the preservation and realisation of these values must be promoted day after day. That is why we take joint responsibility in the ESU.

Thank you for that.

In the meantime, we are making plans for the next videoconferences. We hope that you will be able to be there again. And... we would like to encourage those who have missed these conferences so far. Take a step into this short learning process and... we hope that all our associations will be represented next time.



Enjoy reading.

An Hermans
ESU president

ESU Video Conference 06.11.2020

On Friday 6 November we organised a video meeting concerning 'Let's be guardians of an ethical dimension of politics' with **Prof. Dr. Christiane Woopen** as guest speaker. She is chair of the



European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE*). Prof. Woopen informed us on the lessons to be learned about older persons rights in emergency times. We received many positive reactions to the meeting and we are therefore satisfied with the result.

Furthermore we welcomed: **Mr. Lopez**, is **Secretary General** of the EPP and a Member of the European Parliament, **Mr. Federico Reho** as Strategic Coordinator and Research Officer of the Martens Centre, and Professor **Steven Van Hecke**, from the KULeuven



fluently moderated the discussion with Margaretha Pålsson, Heinz Becker and several other participants. For a more detailed program and report we would like to refer you to our [site](#)



Of course we would prefer to meet 'in person', but we are also happy to see so many familiar faces appearing on our screen. We would still like to make a warm appeal to all those who were not present to ask for help in the future to connect with us online.

*What is the EGE?

The EGE provides the Commission with high quality, independent advice on ethical aspects of science and new technologies in relation to EU legislation or policies.

The EGE is tasked with integrating ethics at

- *International level;*
- *Inter-institutional level with the European Parliament and the Council;*
- *Within the Commission itself.*

EGE members are appointed for their expertise in the fields of law, natural and social sciences, philosophy and ethics. This ensures an independent, interdisciplinary perspective on the ethical questions posed by scientific and technological innovation. The EGE acts as a key reference point for the 27 National Ethics Councils in the EU and further afield within the international ethics framework. The EGE calls for a rallying of solidarity at the European and global level and underlines the core ethical considerations that must shape the pathway out of the pandemic. For more information, click [here](#).

Building a European Health Union

Stronger crisis preparedness and response for Europe

The Commission is putting forward a set of proposals to strengthen the EU's health security framework, and to reinforce the crisis preparedness and response role of key EU agencies. In order to step up the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and future health emergencies, more coordination at EU level is needed. Drawing lessons from the current crisis, today's proposals will ensure stronger preparedness and response during the current and future health crises.

President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen stated: *“Our aim is to protect the health of all European citizens. The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the need for more coordination in the EU, more resilient health systems, and better preparation for future crises. We are changing the way we address cross-border health threats. Today, we start building a European Health Union, to protect citizens with high quality care in a crisis, and equip the Union and its Member States to prevent and manage health emergencies that affect the whole of Europe.”* Find more information [here](#) and [here](#).



What could it mean?

- More funding and competences for several existing programmes including the ‘EU4Health’ programme - the EU's response to COVID-19
- A reinforced European Medicines Agency (EMA)
- A strengthened European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)
- Building a new European BARDA – Agency for Biomedical Advanced Research and Development – to enhance Europe's capacity to respond to any future cross-border threats.

The Commission president also called for new competences in the field of health, as part of the forthcoming Conference on the Future of Europe to be held in Italy next year.

Supporting civil society in Belarus

Our President An Hermans has made a short statement on the situation in Belarus: *“As president of the European Seniors Union (ESU), a network of seniors’ associations in Europe, I like to express my support to the democratic opposition in Belarus. Belarus has been in the midst of a political crisis since the disputed presidential elections (9th of August) led to an uprising against authoritarian President Lukashenko. After several months the non-violent demonstrations have continued across the country. Young and old, men and women have joined*



forces to demonstrate peacefully, calling for democracy, calling for fair election results, for a peaceful country to live in. The regime's only response was brutal action. Thousands of peaceful protesters have been arrested, and several individuals have been reported missing. Numerous sources indicate that Belarusian officials have subjected hundreds of people to mistreatment during their imprisonment.”

In a nutshell here is the **main message**:

- a) Release of all political prisoners;
- b) New and fair elections in Belarus;
- c) Stop of repressions and punishment of perpetrators and of course;
- d) Resignation of Lukashenko.

Besides the general disapproval of the Belarusian crisis... we are also thinking of Tatsiana Zelko, president of the association "Our Generation" in Belarus. She is very active in the demonstrations. Every Monday there is a ['demonstration of seniors'](#) and she is on the front line of it. We admire her and wish her much courage.

[See the video.](#)

Upcoming events

The near future remains unclear with COVID-19, but with our online events running smoothly and successfully, it motivates us to look ahead:

- A video conference with the EU vice-president responsible for Democracy and Demography
- Our Summer Academy
- A conference in Spain
- A regional conference in Tallinn in September