

In this newsletter we would like to share some more testimonials from the ESU members about the 25th anniversary of the ESU. In the previous Newsletter we had the pleasure of reading the messages from Heinz Becker and Bernard Worms.

ESU 25th Anniversary



In this edition you can read the contributions from :

Elisabeth Dispaux Cornil - ESU Honorary President, BE

Lidmila Němcová - ESU Vice-President, CZ

Gabriele Peus-Bispinck - ESU Vice-President, DE

Claus Bernhold - Member of the ESU Executive Committee, DE

Rolf Berend – Member of the ESU Executive Committee, DE

Antonios Demetriades - ESU Vice-President, CY

Václav Roubal – former member of the ESU Executive Committee, CZ

Elisabeth Dispaux Cornil

Les Aînés du cdH – Belgium
ESU Honorary President



Why ESU ? Because we must continue to participate and with our experience, we must contribute to the elaboration of the decisions that directly concern us and above all that concern each one of us.

A memory: the fall of the Berlin Wall and the desire to live in peace. But it is a challenge of every moment. Peace is an everyday struggle and we can do our part. The exploration of the countries that have joined us and their willingness to work together. The barriers of language are easier to overcome than the barrier of solidarity that we must all continue to want.

Lidmila Němcová -

President SKS - Czech Republic
ESU Vice-President

It was a great honour for me to be elected several years ago as a Vice-President of the ESU. At that time Prof. An Hermans as a new President was looking for new methods to work together more effectively. My new function has given me the opportunity to realise concrete contacts with very experienced seniors of other European countries resulting in new challenges and especially in defining our responsibilities for the whole intergeneration society.



I represented the middle generation of the seniors living and working during the socialist time in the Czech Republic, remembering the famous Prague Spring 1968 and the Velvet revolution in 1989. It was clear that our testimony including the examples of the personal or family history, experiences and attitude of the oppressed population toward the political situation in a different period of the development of our society under socialism should be very important for the European seniors movement.

I was very glad that the importance of ethical way of thinking and acting created the basis of our ESU activities. The common ESU publication “**My Story – Our Europe**” about the importance of the Christian values helped the senior writers to overcome the life obstacles under different conditions.

Yes, dignity of any person, truth, justice, human solidarity and democracy should be cultivated at any time. The booklet was a document for younger generations establishing a framework of further needed intergenerational cooperation.

In this context I have organized several Prague ESU conferences and meetings of the presidium with EXCO 2019, 2020. The different topics of them have informed not only about the actual situation in the ex-socialist bloc but created the basis for a fruitful dialogue about the seniors quality of life, intergenerational cooperation, seniors and civic society etc. In my opinion we have considered and solved our problems with our hearts and minds together. The Prague conferences gave us the opportunity to present the Czech country and its enriching culture as a crossroad in Europe.

The Seniors platform in the EP was set up by Mr Heinz Becker, the Euro deputy of the Christian Austrian Seniors in the aim to positively influence the decision processes in favour of the seniors population.

We had many possibilities in Brussels or Leuven to discuss our problems with the members of the EU parliament and to meet the top representatives of Europe thanks to An Hermans, Guido Dumon, Etienne Vanderroost and Bernhard Worms.

Thanks to the ESU we have been also able to develop bilateral cooperation with our member organizations. As to the SKS I appreciate concrete bilateral cooperation with the senior's organization in Poland. We initiated together the presentation of the Polish historical documentary film concerning the invasion of the Polish army as part of the Warsaw military pact to Czechoslovakia in 1968. The premiere took place at the Polish cultural center in Prague last year.

It has been a great honour for me to participate as an ESU representative in the EPP Helsinki Congress in 2018. In the panel discussion headed by Ms Marianne Thyssen I spoke about the role of seniors in the civil European society.

It is necessary to appreciate especially the ESU Newsletter edited monthly by Mr. Ulrich Winz, large participation to the regional conferences, annual conferences in Vienna, cooperation with Belorussia pensioners etc.

We are in present turbulent times at the same boat. In spite of various differences given by historical development we need to be united by the same goals and values.

Prague, 11.10. 2020

Gabriele Peus-Bispinck

Board member of the Senior Citizens' Union of the CDU in Germany
ESU Vice-President



Why is the European Seniors Union (ESU) important to me?

ESU is an important network of older citizens from almost 30 European countries who work together for an age-friendly Europe. ESU is a stable pillar in a Europe of citizens. ESU members are aware of the hopes and problems of older people and can, through their involvement in the EPP, contribute

to important political issues.

What are the memories you will always keep in mind in relation to the ESU?

I will never forget two events from the ESU work: the visit to Minsk, together with An Hermans, Ulrich Winz and a representative of Age in April 2019 and the regional conference in Bratislava in November 2019.

Tatsiana Zelko had invited leading senior representatives from the Eastern Partnership countries to Minsk. Thanks to very good simultaneous translation into English, we were able to follow the discussions precisely. We could not promise the participants that we would lobby the EU to increase their pensions; social policy is a matter for the Member States, but we were able to present ESU to them as a small piece of a functioning civil society.

The hospitality of Tatsiana and her team was overwhelming.

I think of Tatsiana and her fellow campaigners when I read in the newspaper about the brave women who peacefully and non-violently fight against the brutality of the state and about the upset elderly people who take part in a protest action of the pensioners. The most important thing for women and pensioners is to start a dialogue with the authorities, even if recent developments show that the dictator has no interest in a real dialogue with his opponents. Chancellor Angela Merkel will not ignore the appeal to claim her influence in the world.

In Bratislava, 5 members of the ESU Presidium or association chairmen were invited as speakers: An Hermans, Heinz Becker, Lidmila Nemcova and Janusz Marszalek. Each one should talk about one aspect of working with and for seniors in their country.

I had the opportunity to present the work of the Bundearbeitsgemeinschaft der Senioren Organisationen Deutschlands (BAGSO). All speakers were pleased with the great interest shown by the participants, and I went home with the conviction that the ESU is doing extremely useful work, particularly in the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs).

Has the ESU supported/inspired you over the years in monitoring European policies or the functioning of your organisation

The regional conferences and the ESU congress in the CEECs have considerably increased my interest in these countries. I read newspapers and listen to the radio with a completely different intensity and connect what I read with the faces of our ESU colleagues and friends. During the visits I organised for senior citizens from my home town of Münster to Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Romania, it was a great enrichment when ESU colleagues from the concerned countries were willing to talk to the group

Claus Bernhold

Deputy Chairman of the Senior Citizens' Union of the CDU in Germany

Member of the ESU Executive Committee



Why is the European Seniors' Union (ESU) important to me?

Many of my generation still have painful memories of the time of World War II. Our life story has made the conviction grow that such wars and crimes must never be repeated. The European People's Party (EPP), as well as the European Seniors' Union (ESU)

and the European Union emerged as a consequence and result of the devastating experiences of the 20th century.

For me, this Europe is the greatest peace movement in our time. As a soldier in the NATO alliance, I was able to do a little bit to maintain and maintain peace in freedom and economic prosperity for our children and grandchildren. For me, Europe is the great and most important idea of a togetherness of citizens and people overcoming borders, which is reflected in the work of the European Seniors Union for the preservation and strengthening of the European idea and common values.

Rolf Berend

Deputy Chairman of the Senior Citizens' Union of the CDU in Germany

Member of the ESU Executive Committee



Why is the European Seniors' Union (ESU) important to me?

As a former GDR citizen, I lived for 40 years in the European part of our continent, which was separated from a free, borderless Europe by a wall, barbed wire and orders to shoot. For us at that time, Europe was in fact only the East of Europe, namely those countries that shared the same destiny with us. Everything else on the geographical map appeared to be inaccessible for the unforeseeable future.

It was only with the reunification of Germany in 1990 - I had the honour of contributing to as a member of the first and last freely elected National Assembly in the GDR - which was also the beginning of the unification of our European continent, that our lives changed fundamentally. As a politician, I have seen and still see it as an essential task to help this Europe is growing together again and is always "breathing well on both lungs".

In my almost 20 years as a Member of the European Parliament, I have been able to help shape European integration in Strasbourg and Brussels.

Since my retirement, the focus of my political activity has been on working in the Seniors' Union, not only in Germany but also in Europe. As a member of the European People's Party (EPP) and previously of the EPP Group in the European Parliament, it was a matter of course to continue this area of work within the European Seniors' Union (ESU).

This means on one hand representing the cross-border interests of the older generation, but also ensuring that we tell our grandchildren and great-grandchildren about our experiences from the time of the terrible division of our continent and thus make them aware that such things will never happen again in Europe. Safeguarding the peace community and the freedom to live in a united, borderless Europe requires the efforts of all generations, now and in the future. Contributing to this in the ESU with my experiences is my heart's desire and obligation.

Antonios Demetriades - ESU Vice-President

President of Senior Citizens Organisation of Cyprus (OSCC)



The President, the members of the Central Committee and the Cypriot seniors in general send their warmest congratulations and wishes on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of European Seniors' Union.

We commemorate and thank the founders and all those assisted in the establishment of ESU since the 7th Nov. 1955 in Madrid

ESU under the presidency of Prof. An Hermans was an active and well organized Union. President An Hermans were always where needed and tirelessly claiming the right of the elderly on a European level and worthily represented its members.

Cyprus Seniors are very proud to belong to such a European Seniors' Union of beyond 40 associations in 27 European Countries

ESU mission is the promotion of the role of the Elderly in Europe, to fight against discrimination, abuse, the intergenerational solidarity and the creation of constructive age friendly policies . The key challenge of all European Societies is the Demographic change with an increasing generation of the elderly and a decreasing birth rate of younger people. Europe needs the creation of an age friendly European Union designated to support every age.

We as European Seniors have a role to play and must work together with the new generation towards a Better and Safer Europe encourage public to invest in youth skills training and most importantly to control migration.

We thank all who have contributed towards ESU in its entire 25 years history..

As President Prof. An Hermans said : "Since 1995 the European Seniors' Union is a meeting place for men and women who believe in Europe".

Dr. iur. Václav Roubal

Former president SKS

Former member of the ESU Executive Committee



The 25th anniversary of the ESCU is a very remarkable and important date for us, the Association of Christian Seniors of the Czech Republic and its citizens. In 1995, the Czech Republic, as well as the Slovak Republic, were accepted into the EU as succeeding states of the former Federal Republic of Czechoslovakia.

Good relations between the succeeding states, i.e. the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, will remain at the friendly base. Therefore, as the Association of Czech Christian Senior Citizens of the Czech Republic, we have accepted the offer of the President of the Association of Slovak Christian Senior Citizens to mediate our membership

of the European Senior Citizens Union, whose headquarters at that time were in Vienna, i.e. near the capital of the Slovak Republic - Bratislava. This service from our Slovak friends was for our Senior Citizens Association (SKS) as a basis of our effective activity, thanks to our integration into the ESU. Thanks to this mediation of our membership in the ESU, our activities in favour of the senior citizens of the Czech Republic are very much appreciated.

The membership of our SKS of the Czech Republic in the ESU has opened the door to Europe for us, especially due to the opportunities the ESU offered to our SKS Association of the Czech Republic to organise the ESU regional conferences.

These conferences present a great enrichment to the participants in these senior meetings.

The discussed topics of the experiences of senior citizens from all over the EU provide good incentives for the participants to work for the senior citizens of their country and establish very good friendly relations. We believe that this productive work of the senior citizens in the ESU will continue to deliver good results for the senior citizens of the EU and for society as a whole.

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