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Secretary General of the European Senior Citizens' Union (ESCU)

4th Congress of the European Senior Citizens' Union (ESCU)

in Brussels (B), 17./18. October 2001

R E P O R T O F T H E S E C R E T A R Y G E N E R A L :

Period covered by the report from 22 March 1999 to 17 October 2001

Members: 21 member organizations from 15 countries

Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxemburg, Malta, Norway, Sweden, Slovak Republic, Spain.

Observer status: Eurofedop (trade union organization from Belgium), France, Great Britain, South Tyrol (as regional representation - Italy) and EZA (Representation of employees' interests - contact to the Netherlands).

Expressed interest in membership: Slovenia, Poland, Lithuania and Estonia

Italy: The member organization *Partito Popolare Italiano, PPI*, which is represented by Dr. Maria Luisa Cassanmagnago-Cerretti in the ESCU, hasn't reacted to approaches made in the last few months. Their membership fees for the last two years are still unpaid. Thus, their membership must be terminated if the outstanding amount is not paid in the next year.

The Party *Forza Italia* which is an EPP member was contacted, too, and they expressed keen interest in a membership. The appropriate documents will be submitted to them and a personal contact with representatives of the senior citizens organisation of *Forza Italia* will be established shortly.

We cordially welcome the new member organization from Hungary: ORSZÁGOS NYUGDÍJAS POLGÁRI EGYESÜLET.

Meetings of the Executive Committee:

- 10.** 22 Oct. 1999 in Brussels
- 11.** 17-18 Feb.2000 in Strasbourg and Luxembourg
- 12.** 8 June 2000 in Brussels
- 13.** 27 Sep. 2000 in Brussels
- 14.** 8 Feb. 2001 in Brussels
- 15.** 15-17 June 2001 in Riga

Board meetings:

- 5.** 11-12. Sep.1999 in Brussels
- 6.** 7-9 Sep. 2001 in St. Veit/Glan, Carinthia

The projects and events were already mentioned in the report of the President. I would like to seize this opportunity to point out the numerous national events of our member organizations at which special emphasis was put on their membership to ESCU. More than 60 million senior citizens in the EU countries need the international basis in order to establish a balance of life possibilities in old-age. Pensions are an essential element of maintaining an adequate and secure income in old-age. However, money alone isn't everything. The intergenerational attitude must be developed at European level and be further developed so that a life in human dignity within the family as well as within our society can be enjoyed.

Unfortunately, there is no adequate co-ordinating body for an efficient cooperation of the NGOs to prepare joint projects and the financing so that double actions and overlapping can be avoided.

The much discussed Platform for Older People's organizations as a liaison committee of the Commission was turned into an independent organization - that is a new NGO which at present predominantly pursues its own interests. The Commission must be reminded by the EU Parliament that all international organizations must be considered as partners in order to put the common interests above individual interests.

With regard to financing, I would like to briefly state that the ESCU is financed by the membership fees and we get a subsidy from the EPP for which we are most grateful.

As departing Secretary General, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who since the foundation of ESCU in 1995 have collaborated and committed themselves for ESCU. Our special gratitude goes to the senior citizen representative in the EPP parliamentary group in the EU Parliament, Dr. Marilies Flemming. She has made an essential contribution to our being able to manage our administrative tasks in Brussels in their office premises. She has carried out many activities, respectively had them done by her co-workers and she also gave financial support when it was necessary.

It should not be left unmentioned that the implementation of the projects supported by the EPP was also carried out most harmoniously and I want to particularly thank the Secretary General, his deputies as well as his co-workers in the office.

It was thanks to the Austrian Senior Citizens' Federation with its federal representative Stefan Knafl, Prof. Dipl.-Ing. Walter Paul, Univ.Prof.Dr Gerhart Bruckmann as well as Mrs Waltraud Dallinger, Mr Reinhold Zeiss, Mag. Michael Schleifer and last but not least the new Secretary General of the Austrian Senior Citizens' Federation, Heinz Becker, that we could carry out the foundation phase and the carrying out of the first two periods of office.

For me personally, it was an honour to help shape the foundation and the development of ESCU in the function of the Secretary General and, as this year I have passed my 65th birthday, I will leave this function in ESCU as well as my function of Secretary –General of the Austrian Senior Citizens' Federation after 20 years.

I wish my successor much success and I will be further at the disposal – if needed – of the ESCU to the benefit of the older people in Europe.