

Responsible - Bold - Challenging

Bonn Declaration of the European Senior Citizens' Union

adopted by the 5th ESCU Congress on 27-29 April 2004

Preamble

Considering that the challenging issue at stake is “What can the elderly do for the society?” and not only “What can society do for the elderly?” the senior citizens of Europe commit themselves in pursuit of equal opportunities and participation rights for young and old, for women and men, in the family, career, society and politics, without discrimination of any kind and without any rigid age limit.

We want:

- The existing experiences and competences of senior and older fellow citizens to be recognised and used in society.
- Their knowledge, experiences and skills to be used not only to contribute to their own well-being, but to the advantage of the society as a whole.
- Senior citizens to be in a position to deliberately prepare and live out the third and fourth phases of their lives.
- Senior citizens to be recognized as responsible contributors to the shaping the future of our home countries and that of our united Europe as a whole.

We welcome the increase in life expectancy and we regret the European decline in births. Consequently, we should not focus on an “over-aging” society but on a “youth shortfall”.

Acknowledging this background, the Delegates of the European Senior Citizens' Union from 19 European countries, assembled in Bonn for the 5th ESCU Congress, commit themselves to the following principles:

I Preserving ethical values

We commit ourselves,

- **To the preservation of marriage and the family.**
It offers across all the generations a stable context, founded on trust, security and protection, caring and responsibility. We note the existing diversity of lifestyles in today's society and wish to meet these with tolerance.

- **To optimal medical care for all age-groups and without any limit of age.**

We will defend, with absolute resolve, the aged patients' rights. Any healthcare approach purely driven by financial considerations is totally reprehensible. We see in such an approach the worst possible form of social selection and euthanasia by degrees. There must be no second-class medical system!

- **To high quality of care and to dignified treatment of care-needing people and people with disabilities.**

It is our firm opinion that the move to a care-home should be the autonomous decision of the person concerned in consultation with his/her own family. In all instances, particular attention must be paid to the healthcare of older persons who are impaired in their daily domestic tasks. In order to prevent isolation and loneliness, a system of help which is measured, well-connected and locally-based must be created, including all kind of modern technological aids. Also rehabilitation opportunities should be ensured. Furthermore, the ESCU calls for common standards in the training of care staff.

- **To responsible support to elderly persons departing this life, and respect for human dignity right up to their final breath.**

Senior citizens see the new and future anticipated possibilities of gene technology and biomedicine as a great challenge. However, we want the opportunities and threats involved in modern research to be carefully examined and weighed up, and we reject the artificial reproduction of humans (cloning). Senior citizens stand opposed to any exhaustive use of whatever kind of biotechnological therapy. Furthermore, we reject any approach that will lead to the legalization of active euthanasia. We will always endeavour to ensure the dignity and the inviolability of human life. Instead, there must be a continued strong promotion of palliative medicine and support for those who are dying.

- **To the promotion of education and professional training based on religious and ethical values.**

II Justice for the different generations

We commit ourselves,

- **To the granting of equal development opportunities for all age groups.**
- **To lifelong learning, beginning already in the earliest childhood.**

- **To quality education beginning in early childhood, and to optimal initial and further training (both school-based and career-based) suited to the individual's abilities and skills.**
- **To continuing education and training for senior citizens, including also access to the new technological media.**
- **To realisation of the "right of humans to work".**

This means a compelling challenge for the state, the economy and society. No-one should be refused a job position solely on the grounds of age.

The performance of work over a lifetime must lead to an adequate guarantee of one's standard of living in old age. Periods of time spent bringing up children must be sufficiently taken into account. Age should not lead to poverty.

So long as there is no independent pension provision for widows and widowers, the surviving dependents' pension must be preserved.

III Combating violence and discrimination

All forms of violence are beneath human dignity. Any discrimination is contrary to our fundamental notions of what is right. Senior citizens will act as an advocate for older persons against violence and discrimination.

A resolution on this critical matter, previously adopted by the European Senior Citizens Union, lists the following issues in particular:

- **Violence against older persons in their own personal environment,**
 - ❖ In their own homes and domestic environment, including violence by family members,
 - ❖ In old peoples-homes and care-homes, as well as in hospitals.
- **Discrimination against older people in society,**
 - ❖ In working life and other assignments (e.g. compulsory early retirement, age limits on public posts, restrictions on the employment given to older persons),
 - ❖ In participating in community life (restriction of mobility through inappropriate regulations),
 - ❖ In safety and security matters (protection of older persons in the traffic, against violence and aggressive assaults, against thefts and burglaries, against fraud and deception),

- ❖ In the handling of new and not easily accessible technologies,
- ❖ In inadequate media projection of senior citizens' life.

IV Expansion of the Common European Home on the basis of a Constitution

We commit ourselves,

- **To rapid expansion of the European Union.**
- **To strengthening the rights of the European Parliament.**
- **To early approval of a European constitution.**
- **To active co-operation between the generations and peoples, by ways of facilitated communication.**
- **To access by older persons to parliamentary seats, in order to take on political responsibility in a concrete manner.**

Our commitment to these principles necessitates, as the basis for the Common European Home, a European Constitution that refers in its preamble to the Christian-Jewish ethical and cultural heritage of Europe.