



**EUROPÄISCHE SENIOREN UNION
EUROPEAN SENIOR CITIZENS' UNION
L'UNION EUROPEENE DES SENIORS**



Declaration of the European Senior Citizens' Union on the Occasion of the VII Congress, 2 to 4/11/2010

We have arrived in the new age: the age of science, technology, electronics and information technology. Furthermore we have entered in the age of a globalised world.

Advancements in science and engineering, and also in economic and political world have led to previously inconceivable changes which we now have to face, making the question audible in all member states of the European Union:

QUO VADIS EUROPE?

We, the European Senior Citizens' Union answer this question with a triple affirmation:

- **Yes to the shaping of an evolving society**
- **Yes to personal responsibility**
- **Yes to solidarity**

1. Political Events in Europe

The "Iron Curtain" was able to be overcome thanks to the irrepressible desire for freedom in EUROPE, especially in the East. This opened the path to the European Union, which now counts 27 member states and is destined to form a more and more unified whole.

The results are:

- political borders have become permeable,
- wars in Europe are no longer imaginable,
- Europe is an economic and monetary union,
- with the Treaty of Lisbon Europe now has the foundation for the establishment and development of a democratic legal system,

--- Europe has for the very first time an elected president and a foreign minister.

2. Demographically Triggered Developments

Demographic changes are almost identical in all the nations of Europe. They can be portrayed by four statements:

- As the only continent in the world, Europe has a steadily declining population; the birth rate regression in all European countries is quite considerable.
“We in EUROPE are becoming fewer!”
- The average life expectancy is high and continues to rise by around three months annually;
“We in EUROPE are becoming older!”
- The composition of the population is changing due to ongoing immigration from other cultures and also from other continents. This requires enormous efforts to achieve integration.
“We in EUROPE are becoming more diverse!”
- Demographic problems could be relieved by more effective employment policy i.e. involving seniors in the labour market.
“We in EUROPE work more effectively!”

3. Global Economic Developments

The changing circumstances in society demand an alignment toward a social market economy.

Our European economic and monetary union has to prove itself in the global financial crisis as a guarantor of stable and sustainable growth. Europe must stabilize the purchasing power of the EURO, so that inflationary development is nipped in the bud and fair competition in global markets comes about.

To the legitimate demands of our time belong:

- intergenerational environmental design (“age friendly cities”)

- intergenerational products
- intergenerational transport
- evolution of modern electronics as aids for daily life, which have to be user friendly
- senior citizen compatible networking of modern communication technologies to bridge the digital gap.

It is also necessary to create non-polluting and environmentally friendly products!

4. Developments in the Health Sector

We are pleased with the increase in life expectancy, thanks to the progress of medicine in diagnosis and treatment, thanks to research by the pharmaceutical industry - but also thanks to the health conscious lifestyle of the population. We are also aware of the significance of effective preventive measures, such as healthy nutrition, physical exercise on a regular basis as well as mental and social activity.

The societal direction of action must therefore be:

- guaranteed access to medical care at affordable prices;
- organised and reinforced home care including medical home care;
- prevention before rehabilitation and rehabilitation before care;
- expansion of palliative medicine and the hospice services (terminal care of those in care and assistance of family members).
- Provision of sufficient resources for sizeable health and care services funding as senior citizens will grow in number largely.
- increased provision of assisted living and mixed generation housing.

5. Developments in Social Security

Great achievements in social policy such as unemployment supports, old age pensions, health insurance and care provision are being put to a severe test by demographic and economic developments.

If these social security measures are compared in different European countries, significant differences become apparent.

Therefore, amid the diversity of situations in different countries of the European Union, everyone is required to find ways in both economy and society to make the practice of solidarity a reality! We strive for alignment of the differing social security systems.

6. Developments in Family Structures

All European societies must take up the challenge of family developments;

- many young people today do not marry and do not found a family
- today marriage is more and more rarely a lifelong commitment
- founding of families now often only happens in the thirties

7. Our agenda for 2010-2013 a clear “Yes” to shaping a changing world

A clear YES to the shaping of a changing world requires;

- **realistic perception of change**
- **accepting responsibility**
- **solidarity** in both the material and immaterial
- **advocating of our traditional values**
- **personal responsibility for everyone**
- **recognition and use of the life experience** of senior citizens

- **better integration of the disadvantaged and the disabled within our society**

We believe the demand for equitableness contains the teachings of Thomas Aquinas, personality, subsidiarity and solidarity. We for instance decisively reject DISMANTLING of the welfare state in line with liberal economic models.

Solidarity is at the heart of all human endeavours.

We define solidarity as:

“Those who ask for something because they know no solution of their own power must be helped.”

Conclusions:

We have to change! Society has to change!

In this respect we put demands on society, but particularly on ourselves; let us go into this new world with enthusiasm, with great courage, indeed with impetus.

- **Support of families** must remain a priority.
- Measures must be taken to counter the **regression of the birth rate**.
- **Reform of education and upbringing**, which are to carry equal weight. The years-old call for lifelong learning must finally be fulfilled in practice with feasible parliamentary resolutions!
- **Economic and financial policies:** Stability of the Euro is the primary task of European economic and financial policy. Only a balanced economy can provide the space for a more equitable social policy.
- **Social policy:** increasing longevity and thus the increase in the elderly population should be recognised as an ENRICHMENT and not a burden.
Therefore, we should in future speak of a four- or even five-generation society, in which the character and significance of each generation are acknowledged.

Cross-generation measures are to be increasingly fostered.
History teaches us all;
“If society is founded on solidarity based on a system of values,
intergenerational equity becomes a reality!”

The EUROPEAN SENIOR CITIZEN’S UNION (ESCU) will for its part, on the basis of freedom with responsibility and solidarity, point out the way for Europe's future so that our occidental world shaped by Christian principles, is perceived in the community of nations as a haven of peace and justice, because we have only one obligation to meet in all stages of coexistence:

“HUMAN DIGNITY IS INVIOLABLE.”

We can only achieve this ultimate goal of politics in the 21st Century if we bravely

THINK afresh and ACT accordingly
while always maintaining SOLIDARITY.