



# Annual Report 2003

## 1. Organs

The Committee and Executive Committee have conducted their working meetings on the basis of the resolutions governing the organisation of work in the ESCU. The following details have been recorded:

### 1.1 Committee

The Committee, made up of seven Vice Presidents and three further members in addition to the President of the ESCU, met five times in 2003, as follows:

- from 6-9/03 in Vienna,
- from 10-12/05 in Stockholm,
- on 27/08 in Brussels,
- from 17-19/10 in Prague and
- on 8/12 in Brussels.

In addition to normal business and routine points, such as political reports from the President, organisation, membership status, advertising and financial matters, the following issues were dealt with *inter alia*:

- Collaboration with senior citizens' organisations at European level (social platform, AGE)
- Regional divisions of the ESCU, regional conferences
- Expansion to the East
- EU Constitution convention
- EP elections 2004
- Reports on the elections and the Euro referendum in Sweden
- V. ESCU Congress 2004 and amendments to statutes and agendas
- Upkeep and improvement of a homepage for the ESCU
- Project work (for more details see below)
- Annual planning



## 1.2 Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is made up as follows: in terms of members eligible to vote, the ESCU Committee and two representatives from each of the member organisations; in an advisory capacity, one representative from each member party of the EPP in which there are (still) no senior citizens' organisations; members with observer status.

The Executive Committee met twice in 2003, as follows:

- on 28/08 and
- on 08/12, each time at the EP in Brussels, where the EPP provides meeting rooms and interpreters. Owing to the heavy demands made on the EP by the Convention meetings, it was not possible to provide meeting rooms and interpreters for meetings of the Executive Committee in the first half of 2003.

Besides the normal business and routine points, the Executive Committee dealt mainly with the issues already discussed in the Committee, and made – insofar as was required – the final resolutions incumbent upon this committee (executive board of the ESCU) under the statutes.

## 1.3 Congress

The Congress is the highest decision-making body of the ESCU. It meets every three years in compliance with the statutes.

The next Congress will take place from 27-29 April 2004 in the Stadthalle Bonn / Bad Godesberg [*Bonn / Bad Godesberg Civic Hall*]. The preparations already underway will be covered in more detail elsewhere.

# 2. Improvement and rationalisation of the mode of operation

## 2.1 Regional conferences

On account of the increasing geographic expansion of the ESCU, caused not least by the addition of many new member states to the EU, it has been decided to hold regional conferences. In addition to reduced travel expenses incurred by the greater proximity, these conferences offer the benefit of giving the members present sufficient time and opportunity to be able to report on their own particular problems, especially since the language problems are of less consequence than, for example, in the meetings of the Executive Committee.

The following regional conferences were held in 2003:

- From 10-12 May in Stockholm with representatives from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Norway and Sweden



- On 12 May in Bratislava with representatives from Austria, the Slovak Republic and Hungary
- On 30 May in Graz with representatives from Austria, Slovenia and Hungary
- On 17-18 October in Prague with representatives from Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

## **2.2 Königswinter working party**

A working party appointed by the President in 2002 proved to be a boon in terms of organising and tightening up the work of the ESCU as well as relieving the bodies of their tasks, especially the Executive Committee.

It met six times in 2003 in Karl-Arnold-Stiftung in Königswinter. The President of the ESCU leads the working party on which the Secretary General and his colleague in the General Secretariat, as well as two colleagues of the President, sit as permanent members. In addition, one or other of the Vice Presidents, the Treasurer and experts also take part on an ad-hoc basis.

The working party does intensive and brisk preparatory work on the schedule for the year and the projects of the ESCU in particular. In the past year it also dealt primarily with the preparations for the V. Congress of the ESCU scheduled for April 2004. This involved not only solving logistical problems (reasonably priced accommodation for the delegates, choice of venue and meeting place, invitation of prominent guests and organisation of a large-scale event in view of the European elections in 2004), but also focusing on key issues of the V. Congress, such as the "Bonn Declaration", the choice of motto and the main statements of the event.

## **2.3 Circulars**

The circulars published every two to three months by Dr Worms since he took over the Presidency at the end of 2001 have proved to be a further useful instrument for the ESCU. Their main purpose is twofold: firstly, to keep members informed between the official meetings of the bodies about the latest developments of the ESCU and its milieu, including in particular the implementation of resolutions taken and recommendations made at previous meetings in any given case; secondly, to contribute to the preparation for coming meetings in terms of their content.

# **3. Projects**

## **3.1 General points**

Apart from engaging in debate on current political issues and issuing ad hoc declarations and/or press statements (e.g., war in Iraq, EURO referendum in Sweden), the ESCU is



mainly involved in project work in order to gain fitting recognition outside for its views and to reinforce its self-perception. This work is therefore financially supported by the EPP.

### **3.2 Project work**

The following procedure has in the meantime proved expedient and successful for working on and publishing the projects:

Project themes are suggested in the plan for the year by the Committee and/or the Executive Committee and granted final approval by the latter. Smaller working parties are then convened on an *ad hoc* basis to work on advance drafts of papers which are then revised by the Committee with a view to being able to adopt them after subsequent discussion in the Executive Committee. A decision is also made as to which bodies – apart from the mandatory submission to the EPP as donor – will be issued with the paper (e.g., EP, EU Commission and Council of Europe, national governments, parties and associations) and, where applicable, what additional comments should be added prior to submission.

### **3.2 Concrete projects**

In 2003 work has been done on the following projects and some have been decided on and adopted:

- "Violence towards the elderly and discrimination against elderly people"  
Luxembourg working party, finally adopted on 28/08
- Memorandum entitled "Admission of Turkey into the EU"  
Munich working party, finally adopted on 28/08
- "Not just giving life years, but giving the years life" (doubled up as a contribution to the Year of the Disabled)  
Leipzig working party, finally adopted on 8/12
- "Senior citizens in state and society"  
Zagreb working party, finally adopted on 8/12
- "Social security in Europe"  
General discussion in Prague; two working parties have been set up

## **4. Member development**

Since its foundation at its 1st Congress in November 1995 in Madrid, the ESCU has been in a constant process of development in respect of its member countries and (in brackets) organisations:



- 1995: 12 founding member countries (with 15 organisations): Belgium (2), Germany (2), Finland, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Austria, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain (2),
- By 2002: 5 additional member countries (with 7 organisations): Croatia, Latvia, Slovak Republic, Hungary (3), Cyprus and 2 more organisations from Sweden and Spain. Switzerland withdrew again in the intervening period.
- 2003: Estonia, Lithuania (2), Czech Republic (2) and one more organisation from Latvia.

Thus at the end of 2003 the ESCU has 28 member organisations in 19 countries.

The recruitment of new members in central and eastern Europe is not least thanks to the travels of the President and the efforts of the regional representative for Eastern Europe, Ulrich Winz. The attempt to recruit at least one national senior citizens' organisation for the ESCU as soon as possible from all acceding countries has therefore been fulfilled - with the exception of Slovenia.

In view of the current development in terms of the decision taken by the EU to admit 10 new member countries in 2004, it is clear that membership of the ESCU and therewith access to financial and technical assistance meets with great interest in these countries in the area of senior citizens' organisations. The major focus of membership extension has therefore been in precisely these countries hitherto.

Efforts made over many years, however, to recruit member parties or their senior citizens' organisations in the countries hitherto unrepresented in the ESCU in the long-standing EU member countries and other west European states to work with and join the ESCU, must not be allowed to subside. This applies to the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, Portugal, France and Great Britain, although at least the last two work with the ESCU through representatives with observer status. Efforts are also being made to recruit the former ESCU member from Switzerland again.

In addition to the representatives from France and Great Britain (2) with observer status and an advisory role, further organisations are represented in the ESCU with observer status from Italy (South Tyrol: 1) and from the employee organisations, EUROFEDOP and EZA.

## **5. Secretary General**

For financial reasons the ESCU is not in a position to be able to afford its own secretariat or full-time Secretary General. The necessary office duties and administrative work are performed by Ute Besmer, who is employed in the national office of the Senior Citizens' Union of Germany. A rented office is available in Konrad-Adenauer-Haus in Berlin.

The Secretary General mainly carries out the work from his home in Freiburg, whereby an added difficulty is that the Treasurer works in Vienna on the premises of the senior citizens'



association which also used to accommodate the secretariat of the ESCU during the six years of the Austrian Presidency and provided the necessary infrastructure. The ESCU also has its statutory base in Vienna.

In addition to the administrative and organisational tasks for which the Secretary General is responsible, he also makes a particular effort to support existing members, and to canvass for new members, in western Europe, whereby the proximity of his place of residence and his many contacts from his former professional and parliamentary work prove especially helpful particularly in relation to France, Switzerland and Italy.

## **6. Finances**

Please refer to the attached Treasurer's report for 2002 and the preliminary report for 2003.

## **7. Public relations work and modern media**

### **7.1 Public relations work**

The Secretary General makes persistent endeavours to stimulate and support press-effective public relations work on the part of the member organisations which, for organisational and financial reasons, have not been sufficiently able to be active in this field hitherto.

### **7.2 Internet**

Following the presentation and approval of a project in the Committee and in the Executive Committee on 11-12/12/2002 a homepage has been set up for the ESCU at the following address:

[www.eu-seniorunion.info](http://www.eu-seniorunion.info)

Moreover, the General Secretariat supports the member organisations in their efforts to familiarise senior citizens with the Internet and other modern media, e.g., by setting up Internet cafés and courses and also by means of exchanging know-how via the General Secretariat.

### **7.3 Flyer**

A flyer has been developed by the Committee to heighten awareness of the ESCU in the political and public arena and to canvass for new members. It is to be printed in the languages of all the members. As well as containing general information there is also a separate part set aside to be completed by the individual national member organisations as they choose.



## 8. Language issue

Europe's diversity is also its strength. For this reason the diversity of languages must and shall also be retained. This does not preclude the fact that English, above all, is becoming increasingly established in many fields, especially technical and scientific fields. This state of affairs is also taken into consideration by the fact that foreign languages are being taught early and to a greater extent in schools, especially as early as primary school stage in most countries.

On the other hand, the knowledge and spread of foreign languages, precisely among senior citizens, is usually inadequate. The ESCU is also confronted with this problem which incurs not least considerable expense for interpreters and translators.

Whereas German, French, English and often Spanish as well can be spoken in the meetings of the Executive Committee, since simultaneous translation into these languages is provided by the EPP free of charge to the ESCU, the Committee deals, as agreed, in the language of the respective President. Where required, members of the Committee or assistants translate consecutively into French or English.

In order to reduce the translation costs in the past, it was not always possible to use simultaneous interpreters and, as a result, the quality of the translations, often justifiably criticised, suffered to some extent. It was therefore decided to have the texts translated in future by native speakers of the languages of the respective member countries who have a written and spoken command of English, French or German.