



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



Rue du Commerce  
B-1000 Brüssel  
Telefon: +32 / 2 / 300 8005  
Telefax: +32 / 2 / 300 8011  
E-Mail: [esu@epp.eu](mailto:esu@epp.eu)  
[www.eu-seniorunion.info](http://www.eu-seniorunion.info)

**Press Statement**

**High expectations for the Portuguese EU Council Presidency  
Decision on Charter of Fundamental Rights is binding on all**

**BRUSSELS. (U.W.)** The President of the European Senior Citizens' Union (ESCU) has taken the opportunity of the change in the EU Council Presidency from Germany to Portugal both to reflect and to look forward. His assessment was characterised by appreciation and confidence whilst charging the politicians with specific demands. His statement to the Board and Executive Committee culminated in the resolution "to do everything in our power to support all the Portuguese Government's political efforts towards peace, freedom, the development of democracy and social justice". The ESCU owed this to its members in 22 European countries, who number more than 400,000, as the ESCU was regarded as their mouthpiece and representative of their interests.

"Europe is following the intentions of the Portuguese Council Presidency closely and has high expectations," declared Bernhard Worms to his organisation's leadership in Brussels. Citizens' interests were focussed mainly on the conference scheduled for autumn for the 27 EU member states concerning the Charter of Fundamental Rights, for which the EU summit at the end of June had cleared the way. Patient negotiations on the part of Germany's Council President, Dr. Angela Merkel, and her team with support from a large number of EU partners had succeeded in "releasing Europe from its constitutional paralysis to take a fresh look at the future of the continent." Now "legally binding fundamental rights for all EU citizens are on the agenda," stated Worms. Linked to this are such significant decisions as strengthening the European Parliament and the introduction of majority voting in the Council of Ministers.

**Preserving common interests**

"The ESCU objects resolutely to any attempt which may be made to call into question again the compromise which was reached at the recent EU summit. What was recently achieved in Brussels - with tortuous progress - is forward-looking and also binding on all participants. Individual interests must be set aside in the interests of European solidarity and strength. The resolutions will be to the advantage of all generations - from the young to the elderly."



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Considering their government's reservations, the Polish people gave the ESCU grounds for optimism in the wake of a survey carried out in April whereby 87 percent (2004: 69 %) were exceptionally sympathetic towards Europe, putting them in top position within the EU family. "The European Senior Citizens' Union will build on this," re-assured Dr. Worms, "as new approaches begin to be made to develop contacts with the Polish centrist parties and their senior citizens, while their representatives will be extremely welcome at the ESCU's VI Congress at the end of September in Pulheim in Germany."

**Pledge to creation**

"In solidarity and with satisfaction", the ESCU has adopted the recent agreements concerning global climate protection and the conspicuous development of renewable energy sources. Globally accessible means and agreements are finally emerging for the safeguarding of creation, Dr. Worms went on to explain. "These ambitious goals, which are owed to climate change and are achievable, place an obligation on all nations and citizens of the earth." "Senior citizens, being accustomed to lifelong learning, will also change their lifestyles, as the ecological balance and the need to secure the future for generations to come are at stake," the ESCU President stressed.

**Human dignity is indivisible**

The Portuguese Council Presidency's intention to make Africa a main focus for its six months' tenure is supported by the ESCU. "The situation where two children starve to death every minute has to stop! The ESCU calls on the relatively rich states of the North to fulfil and increase their financial and economic commitments in the fight against hunger and AIDS without delay." It is now urgent that the European Union and other partners, who are subject to constant scrutiny, adopt a multi-layered policy based on partnership and self-reliance! Any setbacks should not discourage the main players.

It remains the case that "human dignity can no longer stop at the borders of countries and continents: everyone is entitled to it, without exception. That is God's command!"

Finally, the ESCU President declared:

"The European Senior Citizens' Union resolves to do everything in its power to support all the Portuguese Government's political efforts towards peace, freedom, the development of democracy and social justice. This would fulfil the expectations of more than 400,000 members in 22 countries of Europe – including all the new EU member states admitted in 2004 – for whom the ESCU acts as a mouthpiece and whose interests it represents."

Brussels, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2007