



SENIOR INTERNATIONAL

News from the European Senior Citizens' Union (ESCU)

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Meeting Lithuania's Senior Citizens

On his first visit to Lithuania at the end of April, Dr. Worms, ESCU President, had meetings with both ESCU member associations. This also laid the foundations for agreements with the German CDU Senior Citizens' Union (State of Baden-Württemberg Section) which were later signed in Berlin (see Issue 3 for more details).

VILNIUS

In front of 80 members of the "Senior Section" of the Christian Democrats (out of a total membership of around 200), Dr. Worms expressed his thanks for the commendation which had been bestowed almost a year ago. It had been the first - and so far the only - tribute received by the ESCU and a real fillip. He spoke with delight about the group's efforts in supporting each and every citizen to take responsibility for their own lives and for society. Alongside human dignity, it was freedom with responsibility, responsibility before God, that was paramount for the ESCU. Dr. Worms commented that the Tagungsstätte [Meeting Place] – the capital's Catholic Academy – was a wonderful source of inspiration to the senior citizens of Lithuania. In response, Dr. Ignaz Vegele, Chairman of the Lithuanian Christian Democrats' (LKD) Executive, expressed his belief that the experience of the ESCU held important lessons for the path taken by the younger generation. Following the meeting with the ESCU President, the election of the Executive took place, with Jonas Volungevicius elected head of the Senior Section and Katilius as his Deputy.

In discussions with the "Senior Club" of the Homeland Union/Lithuanian Conservatives (VU), Dr. Worms and his party – Erika Reinhardt, Deputy President of the CDU Senior Citizens' Union, and Ulrich Winz, Press Officer – learned about the exciting range of activities which had taken place since the start of the year. Incoming President Romualda Hofertiene calculated that membership had grown within a year from 50 to at least 200 in response to the attractive programme on offer. The latest groups to be established were in Kaunas and Kelme (the latter under the leadership of their Deputy, A.Racas), with over 20 members in each of the groups. In Vilnius, the next public event would be held jointly with the VU's youth organisation and is dedicated to the current national political situation.

KAUNAS

The historic town hall in Kaunas was the setting for the first official gathering of the local Homeland Union Senior Club and was witnessed by the guests. The Club was established at the end of February and is led by Arimantas Dragunevicius, who is currently involved in an honorary capacity in the development of the civic museum. Dr. Worms commented that it said much for the local political climate that he was greeted at the entrance to the town hall by a Christian Democrat, Deputy Mayor Kazimieras Kuzminska, who had previously been sent to Siberia for 10 years.

Members of the VU Senior Club included prominent scientists and several previous members of the Seimas, including Rytas Kupcinskas. At the suggestion of Prof. Vilimas, the group was currently engaged in a petition regarding legal reform, consistent with Lithuania's claim to be a "constitutional state".

The President and his Lithuanian hosts held a minute's silence at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which had been desecrated during the Soviet era.

It was with great cheer – and bread and salt – that the guests were welcomed by the residents of a care home in the Panemunės district. They expressed their thanks with a German folk song ("Kein schöner Land in dieser Zeit..."). Manager of the home, Aldona Krinickiene, expressed her joy and satisfaction at the support received from European, state, municipal and private sources to assist in their efforts to provide an excellent quality of life and a high standard of care for the elderly people entrusted to them. So what was once a home to deserving officials is now well on the way to being redeveloped and extended as a modern home for the residents. The next job is the installation of a lift which will remove the last remaining barrier.