



SENIOR INTERNATIONAL

News from the European Senior Citizens' Union (ESCU)

Issue No. 4

August 2006

Estonia Seminar with Leif Hallberg

Swedish ESCU Vice President, **Leif Hallberg**, was the speaker at a Senior Citizens' seminar held in Pärnu (Estonia) and gave a presentation on the topic of "**Bridging the Generations**". He vigorously opposed the idea of a "war of generations" and proposed instead a "bridge of understanding and solidarity", which "should be part of all of our political manifestos" and which included jointly-run local projects. Hallberg quoted an 83-year-old woman from Stockholm who said that "a society that doesn't look after its elderly people when they need help and take care of them is a bad society. It's bad for young people as well, as most of them will unquestionably be old one day and will need help themselves."

Dr. Aili Kogerman and Dr. Helle Mäeltsemees were thanked for organising the seminar which was well attended over the two days, 10th and 11th June, by more than 80 participants from throughout the whole country. As Chairmen of the Senior Citizens' Associations of the Pro Patria and Res Publica parties, they informed participants that the amalgamation of the two parties which is planned for 2007 will also unite the two ESCU member associations.

Another prominent participant at the seminar was Mr Taavi Veskimägi, President of the Res Publica Party, who – like other speakers who followed – presented a roll-call of his country's serious shortcomings: social isolation, low pensions, inadequate hospital and home care provision, and terrible living conditions. The increasing importance of the elderly within the electorate was emphasized and this view was widely shared. Among the speakers were a former minister, members of parliament and other politicians, many of whom were noticeably young.

Tackling isolation / Run-up to the Athens Conference

A conference to address this major need is to be held in Athens at the invitation of the "Neo Democracia" Party and ESCU Vice President, **Maria Kanellopoulou-Mantziafou**.

Those from other countries who are interested are also welcome to attend. (Conditions of attendance have recently been advised to all ESCU member associations by the General Secretariat.) The event, which takes place from 30th September to 2nd October, will compare the situation in various countries of elderly citizens who live on their own. In its response to the 5th Governmental Report on the Elderly which is now available, the responsible German ministry commented that demographic change is manageable and even a society which is ageing holds opportunities for innovation, growth and employment. With reference to the conference theme, the ministry had established that in a survey of 70 to 85-year-olds in 2002 only 10% of respondents had indicated that they often or usually felt isolated. Therefore, loneliness was not a typical or widely-experienced phenomenon among the elderly.

"More care for carers"

is the theme of the "South East Regional Conference" which has been postponed from October to the beginning of December and moved from Hungary to Graz in Austria. Following an address by ESCU Vice President, Wilhelm Mohaupt, the experiences of the "Steirisches Hilfswerk" [a social welfare support group in Styria, Austria] with more than 700 mostly unpaid nursing volunteers will form the basis for discussions.

NEWS IN BRIEF

- ESCU Vice President, Dr. Pál Aszodi from Budapest, has been elected Member of the Hungarian Parliament.
- German pensioners will have to do without an increase in their payments for a number of years, Chancellor Merkel told the Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie [Federation of German Industries] in June.
- In Austria, a "Senior Citizens' Programme" is being developed for the first time. The Austrian Senior Citizens' Association (ESCU member, ÖSB) will take part, writes SIS, ÖSB's weekly information service.