

Angela Merkel: Make use of the experience of the elderly! “Senior citizens’ organisations can bring a great deal to the table. A society which dispenses with this experience will be an impoverished society.” In



a statement by the Chairwoman of the CDU and German Chancellor to the governing bodies of the ESCU in Berlin, Merkel continued that political action needed to support the dignity of human beings “at all stages of life”. She conceded that the “very strict age limits” in Germany could also be discriminatory and called for a review. The ESCU was “a successful association”, to which Dr. Bernhard Worms “had given a soul”.

Greetings from the Holy Father. Dr. Worms has had an audience with Pope Benedict XVI on attending a concert at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls on 13th October. The greetings of the ESCU conveyed by the President were warmly reciprocated. He asked to receive further information about our Union, whose work he welcomed. The first contact with the Holy Father was in 2004 when the ESCU congratulated him on his election and received a very friendly letter of thanks.

Dr. Edeltraud Paul elected. On 6th November, the Executive Committee elected the widow, also an Austrian, of the recently deceased Prof. Walter Paul as his successor as ESCU Treasurer. Dr. Paul’s willingness to take over the office met with grateful applause. She will now hold office until the VIIIth Congress in 2010.

Minister President Peter Müller inspires conference. In his speech to the first “Western” Regional Conference in Saarbrücken on 21/22 October, the head of government in the Saarland (D) gave an analysis of the worldwide financial and banking situation. Amid applause from his audience from Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and France, he stated: “The crisis is not the fault of the social market economy but the result of its perversion.” There was no real alternative to the social market economy and it was the key to overcoming the crisis.

Regional Conferences in 2009. The Executive Committee has confirmed the conference plans presented by Secretary General Uhlenbrock. The following events are scheduled with the EPP:

- 17 March Eupen (Belgium): “Participating in the life of society” (Western Region)
- 7/9 May Dresden (Germany): “Europe – a shared legacy and a shared future” (Eastern)
- 26 /27 May Vienna (Austria): “The EU – engine of European solidarity” (South Eastern)
- 24/25 September Tallinn (Estonia): “Healthy Ageing” (Northern/Baltic Region).

Mediterranean Region: to be advised. Board meeting in Brussels on 5th March.

Political discussions in Slovenia. Pensioners in Slovenia have high expectations of their politicians. At an event in Ljubljana attended by some 200 people at the beginning of November, they called for pension increases to be speeded up. By forming a consortium, the three ESCU member senior citizens’ associations – the SLS, SDS and N.Si - intend to step up their influence on the government. The situation of the older generation was also the topic of a discussion to which the serving Prime Minister, Janez Janša, invited the ESCU President, Vice President Flemming and Bogdan Bradac and Ivan Bizjak as representatives of Slovenian pensioners at his official residence.

Poverty in old age is a real threat. This was also an issue for Germany, stated Dr. Wulff, as more and more elderly people are having to apply for the “basic social security” scheme introduced in 2003, as their pensions are no longer adequate. The Seniors’ Union is calling for a re-structuring of social security for the elderly.

Honorary doctorate awarded to Dr. Horst Posdorf. In recognition of the many years that Dr. Posdorf has advised politicians and undertaken development work as a teacher in Cambodia, the German MEP has been awarded an honorary university doctorate in the presence of the Prime Minister, Hun Sen. Until recently, Posdorf was a member of the ESCU’s Executive Committee.