



SENIOR INTERNATIONAL

News from the European Senior Citizens' Union (ESCU)

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Lauding it as a “decision for the future”, the ESCU welcomed the Finnish Parliament’s ratification of the draft EU constitution. In his recent press release, Dr. Worms called for the support of the 9 states which are still not on board and encouraged them to vote in favour. From January, we can expect to see more vigorous initiatives in this direction during the German EU Presidency. (For full text, please go to www.eu-senioren.info)

The VI ESCU Congress is to be held in Pulheim near Cologne (Germany) from 30th September to 2nd October 2007 and will cover the subject areas of church, senior citizens and Europe. At its meeting on 7th December in Brussels, the Executive Committee confirmed the dates, venue and topics. Delegates arrive on 29.09.07, and on the following day an ecumenical act of worship will be held in the Abtei Brauweiler abbey. Detailed information to be sent out with the invitations.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the “Treaty of Rome” (establishing the European Economic Community), there will be a central event in mid-March in Berlin. The ESCU will be taking part through its delegates, observers and guests.

The European Senior Citizens' Pass – to be issued by the ESCU – has been approved in principle in draft form by the governing bodies in Brussels. It will bear the name, date of birth and photo of the holder. The amendments to the format requested by member associations (ESCU and EPP logos, font size, etc.) have been incorporated, and the passes will be printed in English and in the respective national language of member states.

Ingeborg Uhlenbrock (Germany) and Wilhelm Mohaupt (Austria) received warm congratulations from the President and the Executive Committee on the occasion of their 70th birthdays. President Worms praised the achievements of the General Secretary and the Austrian Vice-President, who has held various important offices since the ESCU was set up in 1995.

The move to the new General Secretariat office at rue de Commerce/Handelstraat 10 in Brussels will probably take place in March 2007. Sophie Paeme (pronounced “Pah-ma”) will be working for one-third of her time for the ESCU.

“Helping the Helpers” is the theme of the South Eastern Regional Conference on 2nd/3rd March in Graz (Austria). The arrangements for this are being undertaken mostly by Vice-President Mohaupt, with the Steirische Hilfswerk welfare organisation as co-organisers. Participants from Austria, Hungary, Slovakia and Croatia will undertake visits as well as experiencing the life and culture of the Steiermark region.

Three well-known figures from Poland, Netherlands and Luxembourg will be awarded the Helmut Kohl Golden Badge of Honour for services to Europe on 26th April in the city of Luxembourg. ESCU Vice President, Prof. Nicolas Estgen, is responsible for the arrangements on behalf of the Foundation which was established in 2005. We look forward to welcoming senior citizens from the neighbouring regions of Luxembourg, Belgium and Germany as guests at the event.

The European Medicines Agency based in London was approached by the ESCU with the request to instigate user-friendly changes to the package leaflets enclosed with medicines. We appealed for clearer descriptions of the action of the medicine, its side-effects and dosage instructions, as well as improved legibility (bigger font size).

Emailing the British Prime Minister is now possible and this also includes petitions. In two days, 48 members of the public made use of this facility, in responding – more by chance – to an appeal from the “Senior Citizens' Party”. After three weeks, this figure had already reached 300. The party, which became a member of the ESCU on December 7th, is looking for a fairer system of property-related taxation (i.e. assessment based on income tax instead of council tax).

Not even the inflationary adjustment was able to procure the 4 per cent increase in pensions which had been announced in Hungary, according to Vice President, Dr. Aszodi. The minimum pension stands at € 120, and the average pension at € 240, with 5 per cent of pensioners receiving a “dream pension” of € 500-600.