



EUROPÄISCHE SENIOREN UNION  
EUROPEAN SENIOR CITIZENS' UNION  
L'UNION EUROPEENNE DES SENIORS



**General Secretariat:**

Hermann-Seger-Str. 23, D-50226 Frechen

Tel: +49 (0)2234 188 419, Fax: +49 (0)2234 188 410

e-mail: [esu@cdu.de](mailto:esu@cdu.de) Internet: [www.eu-seniorunion.info](http://www.eu-seniorunion.info)

## European policy in need of deeper draught

### Jouni Mykkänen interviews ESCU President, Dr. Bernhard Worms

Vienna, 26th July 2011. At the close of the ESCU's 2nd Summer Academy, its President, Dr. Bernhard Worms, granted an interview to his Vice President, Jouni Mykkänen (SF). Worms gave his views on current issues and analysed proceedings at the three-day event which was themed: "Where is our society drifting in the 21st century?" with the tagline "Ethics and morals demand political action". The conference took place in collaboration with the Austrian Senior Citizens' Union, the Centre for European Studies (CES), the European People's Party (EPP) and the Political Academy in Vienna.

*Mykkänen:* **What do you consider to have been the most important events in Europe and the world in the first half of 2011?**

*Worms:* The biggest and toughest experience in Europe has been the financial crisis which now necessitates the stabilisation of the common currency in the euro zone. Huge economic problems also exist in the USA and the creditworthiness of the United States is vital for the whole world. It remains essential that none of the national economies allows its debt to exceed an upper limit.

The EURO must be stabilised and be the single currency in Europe in future as well. This will require collective political will and determination. In the interests of acting consistently, I would advocate harmonising foreign policy and defence policy in Europe.

European policy is in need of a "deeper draught" than before.



Dr. Bernhard Worms, former State Secretary ranks who have already suffered the effects of the economic global crisis in the 20th century.

Confidence in purchasing power is paramount for Europeans, and that applies to all generations. We in the European Senior Citizens' Union identify with the decisions of the EU and call for them to be implemented by all member states. We have people in our

*Mykkänen:* **What do you think of the European discussions about retirement age?**

**Worms:** In the ESCU, we advocate a flexible retirement age. Each individual must be able to decide for themselves when they would like to draw their pension, especially as many of us are living longer. There is a close correlation between retirement age and economic stability.

*Mykkänen:* **What are you hoping for from the 2012 European Year of Active Ageing initiative? What was the outcome of this year's Summer Academy?**

**Worms:** The Summer Academy achieved its aims thanks to the high class presentations provided by expert speakers and the lively discussion. Irrespective of where we came from, everyone picked up some useful ideas for their own purposes. They're worth incorporating into all our member organisations' programmes and thus will reach the 1.3 million people associated with the ESCU.

The items on the agenda in Vienna form the basis of our work as the ESCU but individuals can also make use of them.

With regard to the European Year of Active Ageing in 2012, it seems to me that it is important that citizens – and predominantly older citizens – do everything they can to remain healthy for a long time. Health care together with preventative measures are a significant part of modern society.

We appeal to town planners to ensure that their housing and transport infrastructure designs take account of a society which is becoming older. All disabled people have the right to drive a vehicle which is suitable for them and to use any and all roads.

From society – from our politicians – we expect conditions to be created for lifelong learning for our citizens.

If next year every government undertook at least one policy and legislative initiative based on the European Year, overall we would take an important step forward.

I see the European People's Party (EPP) Congress in Marseilles in December as an important event for the near future. As the ESCU is a member organisation of the EPP, we will of course be participating and involved in proceedings.

For our continent to develop successfully, we need the cooperation of all European institutions, governments, employees and employers, organisations, local authorities and the churches.