

**Report on ESO Activities**  
**during the years 2006 – 2009**  
**for the PES Congress in Prague 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> December 2009**



*“The European Senior Organisation (ESO) is a key player in the European debate on the future development of the welfare state. The ESO endeavours to make a valuable contribution to the redefinition of the principles of a European social model which links economic growth and competitiveness in a globalised economy with social security and values. A social model of this kind is the only alternative to the impending economisation of all areas of life. The ESO is committed to values not traded on the world’s stock exchanges: social justice and solidarity. It advocates a Europe-wide campaign against unemployment, because the financing of pensions and health insurance is affected far less by demographic shifts than by the loss of income for the state and increasing costs posed by unemployment. Giving the labour force and pensioners a share in the gains from increased productivity equal to that of capital investors will not cause the collapse of the welfare state.”*

Karl Blecha, President of ESO

**A) The European Senior Organisation ESO adheres to the objectives of the PES.**

1. To uphold and spread the fundamental ideas of the Party of European Socialists (PES), as well as implement its objectives and programme in the framework of its work.
2. To promote and safeguard the economic, social and cultural interests of the elderly in Europe.

3. The ESO aims to improve the social status and position in society of older people in Europe, and therefore to develop programmes on the topic of age, solidarity between generations, medical care, protection of consumers, social security (fundamental right to a retirement benefit) and economic protection (pensions and annuities) and to strengthen the participation and active involvement of the elderly in the community, society and in European politics.
4. To represent and defend the interests of elderly people in the European bodies, in particular in the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council.
5. The work of the ESO is not to generate any profits, its activity serves the public interest

## **B) Membership:**

Members of the ESO can be all seniors' organisations and associations if they adhere to the objectives and tasks of the PES. This refers also to all departments and/or persons responsible for senior policy within the PES member parties, associated parties and observer parties.

At the moment, the following countries are members or observers:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Luxemburg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Slovakia, Slovenia.  
We have contacts to Denmark, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom.

## **C) Aims and Visions:**

### **1. ELIMINATION OF AGE DISCRIMINATION**

Age discrimination must be eliminated completely throughout every field of social life. Anyone willing and capable of working should be able to do so. The rights of the elderly to lead a life of dignity and independence and to participate in social and cultural life, as well as the entitlement to social security benefits must be guaranteed.

### **2. SOCIAL EUROPE – THE BASIC RIGHT TO A PENSION**

One of the most important assets in the welfare state is financial security in retirement for its citizens. The state must not absolve itself of its responsibility for pensions; instead, it must underpin the contract between the generations in financial terms. The contract between the generations means that the working generation provides security in retirement for the older generation through a system of taxes and contributions. Any differences that may arise between the contributions made by younger generation and the needs of the older generation must be made good by the state. As well as reserve funds, a tax on value added will be required on a Europe-wide basis. This means that in times of decreasing wage shares and rising company profits, wages and salaries can no longer be the sole assessment basis for social security contributions.

### **3. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY**

The social, cultural, economic and political contributions made by the older generation must be recognised, the participation of older persons in decision-making processes at all levels must be ensured and their involvement in the democratic formation of the political will and policy planning must be facilitated.

#### **4. PROMOTING WORK AND EMPLOYMENT AMONG OLDER PERSONS**

In Europe, the employment rate among women, but especially among people in the 55-65 age group, must be increased substantially.

#### **5. BETTER ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE, EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

The social integration and political participation of older persons mean, above all, maintaining older persons capacities to learn. Lifelong learning is a prerequisite in ensuring that older persons can play a full part in work and society.

#### **6. SOCIAL SECURITY**

To avoid social exclusion, besides an appropriate level of pensions, it is essential to maintain individual living standards and promote solidarity. Measures to prevent poverty in old age are also needed, in particular measures to address the higher poverty risk faced by women (especially elderly women) are necessary.

#### **7. PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING INTO OLD AGE**

Universal access to high quality and affordable healthcare, medical care and care services on a long-term basis must be ensured. No two-tier medicine, no discrimination on grounds of age regarding medicine and medical treatment.

#### **8. MAINSTREAMING STRATEGY ACROSS ALL POLICY AREAS**

We call for consumer protection, for mobility for senior citizens, for the establishment of an advisory council of European senior citizens associations and for a report on ageing to be submitted in each legislation an European senior citizens card, research projects on demographic change, EUROSTAT statistics that take into account age groups, and an European Internet portal for the older generation.

#### **9. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS**

One of the aims of ESO is the cooperation with younger people to advance solidarity between generations. Therefore we keep in touch with ECOSY and Katarine Nevedalova, newly elected MEP from Slovakia.

#### **D) Seminars and activities during 2006 to 2009:**

In order to discuss socio-political issues and find a common position ESO member states usually meet twice a year. One seminar is traditionally held in Brussels and the other is organized by one of the member states. Fortunately the members of the ESO are quite active in taking part in the seminars, so that our conferences and seminars are a living exchange of ideas and views and a think-tank for the current political work in each member state. The results are summarized in a working paper or a programme which the ESO members present to the EU and their local governments.

#### **The current programme consists of 10 points for a Social Europe:**

- Active participation of older people and recognition of their achievements in society
- To overcome age discrimination and realisation of solidarity between generations
- Promotion of work and employment for older persons
- Securing purchasing power of pensions, providing finance e.g. with a tax on value added basis
- No “Two-Class-Medicine” – medical care independent of age and status

- High quality affordable long term care
- Better access to knowledge, education, further training and culture
- Strengthening of consumer protection
- Securing mobility for senior citizens
- Extensive fight against poverty and social exclusion

During the past four years different topics had been discussed. In the following we will give a short survey where meetings took place and which issues were tackled:

## **2006:**

**1<sup>st</sup>- 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2006:**

**ESO – Seminar: ”SOS – Europe. Save our social Europe”**

**Vienna, Austria**, hosted by Pensionistenverband Österreichs and the Volkshilfe

**26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> May 2006:**

**ESO – Seminar: ”The position of seniors in the society”**

**Praha, Czech Republic**, hosted by CSSD – Czech Sozial Democratic Party

## **2007:**

**1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2007: 3. ESO-Congress ”For a social Europe”**

**Berlin, Germany**, hosted by AG SPD 60 plus

Elections of the Executive Board:

President:	Mr. Karl Blecha, Austria
Vice President:	Mr. Otto Graeber, Germany
Vice President:	Mrs. Corry Maes, Belgium
Vice President:	Mrs. Yenny Ytsma, Netherlands
Vice President:	Mr. Jenő Üszöghy Bleyer, Hungary
Vice President:	Mrs. Ana Bartol, Croatia
Treasurer:	Mr. György Jankovits, Hungary
Auditor:	Mrs. Kvetoslava Korinkova, Czech Republic
Auditor:	Mr. Kamil Vajnorsky, Slovakia
Secretary General:	Mrs. Hilde Hawlicek, Austria

Presentation of the ESO-Homepage: <http://www.eu-senior.com>

**27<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2007:**

**ESO – Seminar: ”Health prevention – Minimum wage”**

**Krapinske Toplice, Croatia** hosted by Socijaldemokratski Forum Seniora Hrvatske – SDP

## **2008:**

**6<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> May 2008:**

**ESO-Seminar: ”Towards a Social Europe and against age discrimination – democratic change as a challenge for European politics”**

**Brussels, Belgium**, hosted by the Socialist Group in the European Parliament

**12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> October 2008:**

**ESO-Seminar: ”Financing the pensions system in new member countries. The elderly on the labour market.”**

**Tallin – Helsinki, Estonia and Finland**, hosted by local Senior Organisations

**2009:**

**3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> March 2009:**

**ESO-Seminar: “Active participation in the EU-policy processes.”**

**Brussels, Belgium**, hosted by the Socialist Group in the European Parliament

**13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> October 2009:**

**ESO-Seminar: “Social responsibility in Europe. Fair share for seniors”**

**Bratislava, Slovakia**, hosted by the JDS - Slovakian Seniors Organisation

**E) Outlook:**

On the last Seminar in Bratislava the ESO Executive Committee decided to organize the next seminar again in March in Brussels. In the end of 2010 there will be the next ESO – Congress, with new elections and on the proposed topic “The role of social democracy in Europe”.