

## **ESU SUMMER ACADEMY 2025**

### **DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN EUROPE**

- **Consequences for Seniors and Challenges for European Governance** -

**Bruges - Belgium**  
**12 – 14 September 2025**

Almost all European countries will face the challenges of an ageing population and a declining birth rate. Over the coming decade, not only the size but also the composition of the population is expected to change significantly: the proportion of older people and residents with diverse cultural backgrounds will increase.

This demographic shift brings about a growing group of seniors, but also a greater differentiation within this group. On one hand, there are active, vital younger seniors, while on the other, there is an expanding group of much older seniors with more complex care needs (the so-called "whitened seniors"). Furthermore, trends such as an increase in single-person households, single-parent families, reduced entry of young people into the labour market, and greater mobility, which weakens family ties, are also becoming more prominent.

This inevitable demographic change will have a profound impact on intergenerational social cohesion, the availability of workers for essential sectors of society, our economies, access to services, and the sustainability of welfare and healthcare systems. Additionally, it will affect housing and infrastructure needs across many regions in Europe. These developments will, in turn, have significant implications for government budgets and policy-making.

Demographic trends do not affect all EU countries and regions in the same way. Even though Europe as a whole is an ageing continent, the pace at which regions grow older varies significantly. Some regions will experience significant population decline in the coming years, whereas in others, the population is projected to grow.

These demographic challenges and the corresponding policy responses are nonetheless underpinned by shared concerns, providing opportunities for mutual learning and the exchange of best practices. Addressing demographic change in a timely manner is crucial for building a more resilient and sustainable economy, as well as a fairer society for future generations.

Since 2010, a Summer Academy has been organised annually. In 2025, the Summer Academy will take place for the 16th time. Over the course of three days, experts, speakers, and representatives of seniors' organisations will study and discuss "Demographic changes in Europe – Consequences for seniors and challenges for European governance" from various perspectives. Subthemes will include digital developments, healthcare, the financial and economic position of older people, and political participation from a value-based perspective.

The insights gained, as well as the exchange of ideas and best practices, will serve as a source of inspiration for the ESU to develop policy proposals and initiatives. These will form the basis for a dialogue with relevant European and national policymakers.

With the conclusions of this Summer Academy, the aim is to provide the impetus for further exploration of specific themes, contributing to the creation of a 'better Europe for all seniors in Europe'.

The Summer Academy is organised by the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies in cooperation with Ceder (CD&V's research department). We are also grateful for the assistance of CD&V seniors and the CDA's research department for their efforts to support the event. The Summer Academy will take place in Bruges, Belgium.

## Programme of the 16th Summer Academy (vs.03/09/2025)

<p><b>Friday, 12 September 2025</b> <b>Hotel Casselberg</b> <b>Conference room 'Memling'</b></p>	<p><b>14:30 Registration and welcome to the participants</b></p> <p><b>15:00 Opening session</b> Opening speech by <b>Eric Van Rompuy</b>, President of the CD&amp;V seniors Statement by <b>Stefaan Vercamer</b>, President of ESU</p> <p><b>15:15 Introduction to the overall theme and its subthemes</b> Statement by <b>Patrick Penninckx</b>, Secretary General of ESU and General Moderator of the Summer Academy</p> <p><b>15:45 Demographic Developments in Europe between 2025 and 2050</b> <u>Keynote Speaker:</u> <b>Peter Hefe</b>, Policy Director of the Wilfried Martens Centre <u>Panel Members:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Arjen Siegmann</b>, Executive Board Member of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies</li> <li>• <b>Adam Wronski</b>, Polska Unia Seniorów</li> <li>• <b>Teona Lavrelashvili</b>, Research Associate of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies</li> </ul> <p><u>Moderator</u> : <b>Cor Spreeuwenberg</b>, Vice President of ESU</p> <p><b>17:30 Welcome by the Mayor of Bruges, Dirk De fauw at the Bruges City Hall</b> <b>Launch of the publication of 30 years of ESU</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement by <b>Stefaan Vercamer</b>, President of ESU</li> <li>• Statement by <b>Peter Hefe</b>, Policy Director of the Wilfried Martens Centre</li> </ul> <p><b>19:30 Welcome dinner in restaurant Verdi (Bruges)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement by <b>Stefaan Vercamer</b>, President of ESU</li> <li>• Speech by <b>Sammy Mahdi</b>, President of the CD&amp;V</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Saturday, 13 September 2025</b> <b>Hotel Casselberg</b> <b>Conference room 'Memling'</b></p>	<p><b>09:00 Introduction to the structure and working style of the Summer Academy's topics</b> Lecture on the subthemes, practical examples, Q&amp;A, and panel discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cor Spreeuwenberg</b>, Vice-President of ESU</li> </ul> <p><b>09:30 Subtheme 1: Digital Developments and Ageing</b> <i>The digital environment provides unprecedented opportunities for self-expression, learning, and socialisation. However, it also creates challenges, such as the "physical-digital divide," which excludes some older adults. This session includes discussions on experiences, experiments, and the role of governments in overcoming these divides.</i> <u>Keynote Speaker:</u> <b>Patrick Penninckx</b>, Secretary General of ESU <u>Panel Members:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Shruti Singh</b>, Senior Economist in the Skills and Employment Division of the OECD</li> <li>• <b>Julie Guichard</b>, EU Digital Safety lead – Government Affairs at Microsoft</li> <li>• <b>Philippe Seidel Leroy</b>, Policy Manager on Social and Economic policies and European Parliament Liaison - AGE Platform</li> <li>• <b>Claus Bamberg</b>, Network for Senior-Internet-Initiatives e.v. in Baden-Württemberg</li> </ul> <p><u>Moderator:</u> <b>Patrick Penninckx</b>, Secretary General of ESU</p> <p><b>11:00 Coffee/Tea Break</b></p> <p><b>11:30 Subtheme 2: Economic and Financial Consequences</b> <i>Population ageing, combined with lower fertility rates, raises critical questions about the economic and financial future, including pensions and intergenerational inequalities. Policy action is essential to ensure economic sustainability and equity.</i> <u>Keynote:</u> <b>Vincent Van Peteghem</b>, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of the Belgian Federal Government <u>Panel members:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wouter de Tavernier</b> – Economist Pensions - OECD</li> <li>• <b>Arjen Siegmann</b> - Professor in financial economy, member CDA - scientific institute and Ceder</li> <li>• <b>Jaap Van der Spek</b>, Member of the board of CDA-seniors, financial specialist concerning pensions and former Secretary-General of EURAG</li> </ul> <p><u>Moderator:</u> <b>Arjen Siegman</b> (tbc)</p> <p><b>13:00 Lunch in hotel Casselberg</b></p>
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**14:30 Subtheme 3: Healthcare and Long-Term Care (Part 1)**

*Dramatic changes in healthcare demand and supply are expected, driven by AI, technological advances, staff shortages, and rising costs. This session explores the political framework of the European Union regarding the demographic changes and long-term-care*

Keynote: **Liesbet Sommen**, MEP for EPP (Belgium)

Panel members:

- **Siegfried Mureşan**, MEP for EPP (Romania) and Vice-President of the ESU
- **Ivo Belet**, Deputy Head of Cabinet of European Commissioner for the Mediterranean and for Demography, **Dubravka Šuica**

Moderator: **Cor Spreeuwenberg**, Vice-President of ESU

**16:00 Tea Break**

**16:30 Subtheme 3: Healthcare and Long-Term Care (Part 2)**

*This part will explore the consequences of demographic changes and the EU strategy for the organization of elderly care in the member states, and what this means for the future of (elderly) care. Exploring Flanders, the Netherlands, and Finland.*

Keynote:

- **Johan Albrecht**, Senior Fellow and founding member at Itinera, and Professor of environmental economics at the University of Ghent
- **Henk Nies**, Professor of Organisation and Policy in Long-term Care, VU Amsterdam

Panel members:

- **Lien Van Malderen**, Advisor Long-Term Care- Zorgnet ICURO
- **Minna-Liisa Luoma**, Chief Specialist Finish Institute for Health and Welfare
- **Dirk Lips**, CEO Curando

Moderator: **Cor Spreeuwenberg**, Vice-President of ESU

**19:00 Celebration Dinner in restaurant Verdi (Bruges)**

Welcome by **Stefaan Vercamer**, President of ESU

Statement by **An Hermans**, former President of ESU

<p><b>Sunday, 14 September 2025</b> <b>Hotel Casselberg</b> <b>Conference room 'Memling'</b></p>	<p><b>09:00 Summary and commentary on topics discussed on Friday</b> <u>Moderator:</u> <b>Patrick Penninckx</b>, Secretary General of ESU</p> <p><b>09:30 Policy and Political Responses to the Topics Discussed</b> <i>This session explores how the EPP and its members can address the expectations and suggestions raised during the Summer Academy.</i> <u>Keynote:</u> <b>Dolors Montserrat</b>, Secretary General of the European People's Party <u>Panel Members:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wouter Beke</b>, MEP (Belgium)</li> <li>• <b>Ingeborg ter Laak</b>, MEP (the Netherlands)</li> </ul> <p><u>Moderator:</u> <b>Wouter Van Butsel</b> (<i>tbc</i>)</p> <p><b>11:00 Closing Session</b> Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Herman Van Rompuy</b>, Honorary Board Member of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies;</li> <li>• <b>Stefaan Vercamer</b>, President of ESU</li> </ul>
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