International conference
Half a century of political controversies relating to social security reforms for the elderly in Europe.

The Centre for Parliamentary History (CPG) of the Radboud University in Nijmegen, The Netherlands, organizes an international conference on the political controversies relating to the reform of social security provisions for the elderly during the last five decades in Europe.

The organizers invite historians and political scientists with historical expertise who are interested in giving presentations on the following topics:

- A historical overview of the social security provisions for the elderly and the political controversies involved in the modification of these arrangements in one or more European country / countries.
- The impact of older voters on political parties, parliament and government with regard to questions relating to the old age benefit system.
- The impact of the EU on national provisions (for instance concerning legislation relating to the equal treatment for men and women, cf. Council Directive 79/7/EEC of 19 December 1978).
- The (changing) relationship between different actors involved in the decision making process concerning the benefit system: i.e. pressure groups, experts, civil servants, organizations of employees and employers (civil society) and members of parliament and government representatives.
- Poverty policies concerning older persons, including the unemployed.
- Social security policies concerning older migrants.

Date and place: 19 – 20 April 2018 in Nijmegen, The Netherlands

Background Information

The international conference is organized within the context of a more comprehensive program on the parliamentary history of the social security and benefit system in the Netherlands (1980-2014). The program includes a PhD study and an internet application on the subject. The program is coordinated by the CPG.

(A very helpful overview of social security programs in Europe can be found here: https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/progdesc/ssptw/2016-2017/europe/index.html)

The theme of the conference

The conference focusses on one specific aspect of the social security system: the (financial) provisions for the elderly, which include poverty policies and (state) pension arrangements. The conference organizers are seeking contributors who will discuss both specific themes and / or overall developments within the various European countries. We will discuss developments during the last five decades in Europe.

For a number of reasons, the theme of the conference can be considered both relevant and timely. Over the past fifty years, demographic developments have come to challenge old age benefit arrangements in all European countries, especially since the budgets involved are rapidly increasing. Thus, modifications were suggested and sometimes implemented. Discussions about reforms are ongoing and topics such as changes in the retirement age and intergenerational solidarity provoke heated debate all over Europe.

So far, most research on social security reform has been undertaken from a legal, sociological or economic perspective, whereas we seek to add a political-historical point of view. In the decision making process underlying the various arrangements and their alterations, parliamentary debates form a crucial factor. And these debates reflect important questions, such as those concerning the desired balance between provisions to be made and guaranteed by the government, by employers and by individuals, and those concerning the overall affordability of the system.

Other questions relate to the electoral influence of certain age groups with a specific interest in the maintenance and future of the social security system. Also, how do national governments deal with EU legislation on the subject, for instance in the field of equal treatment of men and women? Finally, the role of the various actors involved in the decision making process and their mutual relationships form important topics for investigation. These roles and relationships are bound to differ from one European country to the next, which makes the theme worthwhile for international comparison and transnational analysis.

Speakers who have confirmed participation
- Prof. dr. Lex Heerma van Voss (Utrecht University and Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands of the Royal Academy of Sciences and Arts, The Netherlands)
- Prof. dr. Pat Thane (King's College, London, United Kingdom)
- Dr. Matti Hannikainen (Centre of Excellence in the History of Society, Tampere University, Finland)
- Prof. dr. Maria Petmesidou (Democritus University of Trace, Greece)
- Dr. Karen Anderson (University of Southampton, United Kingdom)
- Prof. dr. Karl Hinrichs (University Bremen, Germany)
- Dr. Nicole Kramer (Goethe Universität, Frankfurt am Main, Germany)
- Prof. dr. Jef Van Langendonck (University Leuven, Belgium)
- Leon van Damme MA (Centre for Parliamentary History, Radboud University, The Netherlands)

Research Group

The Research Group responsible for the program on the parliamentary history of the social security system in the Netherlands (1980-2014) consists of the following CPG members: prof. dr. Carla van Baalen (project leader), mr. dr. Johan van Merriënboer (vice project leader), Anne Bos MA, Leon van Damme MA, Jan Ramakers MA.

External supervisors: dr. Marcel Hoogenboom (Utrecht University), prof. dr. Kees Schuyt (em. University of Amsterdam) and prof. mr. Leonard Verburg (Radboud University).

EuParl.net

The conference is supported by the European Information and Research Network on Parliamentary History (EuParl.net). This network of prestigious national research institutes on parliamentary history in Europe promotes the exchange and dissemination of knowledge and promotes comparative and transnational research.

More information and conference organization

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http://www.ru.nl/cpg/english/