



European Year for **Active Ageing**
and **Solidarity between Generations 2012**



**ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
DECLARATION
11 May 2012**

The current economic and sovereign debt crisis is the greatest challenge the European Union has ever faced. It calls for strong EU initiatives to lead us quickly to recovery. Inequalities have increased dramatically in recent years, and it is unrealistic and unfair to expect citizens of all ages to agree to decades of painful austerity measures if their efforts are not going to help our economy recover and improve the effectiveness, adequacy and sustainability of our social protection systems, for the sake of all generations. All policy measures should be based on clear evidence and a human rights approach.

We agree that there should be good governance of public budgets. AGE members therefore urge EU leaders and Member States to put employment at the top of their political priorities and to adopt strong measures to boost the EU economy, job creation and social cohesion, and to promote a new European society based on greater solidarity, equity and cooperation between and within generations. These are the fundamental values that we all share in the European Union and are at the core of the EU Treaties.

AGE General Assembly 2012 recommends EU and national leaders to:

Human rights, non discrimination and the fight against elder abuse

- Unblock the discussion on the proposed Directive on equal treatment outside employment in order to have effective legislation to combat age discrimination in access to essential goods and services to respond to the needs of Europe's ageing population.
- Include the fight against all forms of elder abuse in all contexts in the work priority of the new Rights and Justice Programme to support NGOs working in this area (as was the case of DAPHNE programme).

- Support the initiative of the Council of Europe to develop an instrument to promote the rights of older people.
- Support the work launched by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the human rights of older people and the proposal for a UN Convention on the Rights of Older People.
- Adopt an EU Quality Framework for long-term care as a means to fight elder abuse and foster older people's wellbeing and dignity, using the outcomes of the WeDO project. Organise a Social Protection Committee Peer Review once a year to allow Member States to exchange their experience on quality LTC and the fight against elder abuse.
- Ensure better coordination of national justice systems and police records to prevent staff who have been convicted of elder abuse in a country to seek work as a carer in another Member State.
- Include 'elder abuse' as a research topic in the Joint Programme on Neurodegenerative Diseases to measure its prevalence and impact on people with dementia, and make recommendations on how to prevent the risk of elder abuse of older people with dementia.

Creating a society for all ages

- Establish a European Covenant of Mayors ¹ on Demographic Change, to create the political framework for local and regional authorities to create age-friendly environments and a society for all ages across the EU. Through the Covenant of Mayors, encourage local and regional authorities to join the World Health Organisation Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities and establish national programmes to support them.
- Follow the recommendations of the Committee of the Regions outlined in the Opinion on Active Ageing: Innovation, Smart Health, Better Lives and provide national support to local and regional authorities to help them meet the needs of their ageing population in innovative, fair and sustainable ways.
- Encourage Member States that have already developed national programmes on age-friendly environments to exchange their experience with other interested Member States to encourage other countries to adopt similar national programmes..
- Ensure that Cohesion Funds and other relevant EU funds can be used to support projects and initiatives promoting age-friendly environments at regional and local levels.

¹ There exists already a European Covenant of Mayors on Smart Energy.



- Adopt EU standards based on the concept of Design-for-All to improve accessibility and the development of solutions that support older people's autonomy and participation in society, and ensure that the silver economy benefits all.
- Promote the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing and encourage national, regional and local stakeholders to join the partnership, in particular action D4 on age-friendly environments.
- Support the Commission's proposal to devote funding to research on active and healthy ageing including the Horizon 2020 programme using the recommendations of the Futurage project.
- Acknowledge the role that older people play in society and establish the GDP value of the contributions made by older people as volunteers and informal carers.
- Ensure that older people and their organisations are fully involved in the development of policies that concern them.

Employment:

- Agree employment targets for both young and older workers broken down by gender and report back annually on progress achieved on each of these groups in the National Reform Programmes (NRPs). This would ensure that efforts are focused on job creation, and support longer working lives through addressing the challenges faced by youth, older people and women in finding and remaining in employment.
- Address the low participation of older workers and women in the labour market by increasing quality and affordable child and eldercare facilities and report back in the National Social Reports (NSRs) on the percentage of young children in daycare and the percentage of older people reporting unmet care needs out of the total number of older people who need care in their country...
- Raise awareness that age discrimination in employment is unlawful. Combat ageism in the workplace more effectively and promote age-friendly working conditions such as flexible working hours, carers' leave provisions, telework facilities, part-time work combined with retirement, etc. Report back on self-perceived age discrimination and health status of workers aged 50+ in the NSRs.
- Develop an EU level reflection involving a wide range of stakeholders to find adequate, sustainable and innovative solutions to enable a better reconciliation of work and family life for family carers, to find solutions to decrease the risks of burnout, and to provide better skills and support to informal carers.



- Support the participation of older workers and long-term unemployed people in quality and affordable life-long learning activities (LLL) through incentives for employers and individuals, and report annually on LLL participation of the 50+ in the NSRs. Promote the development of LLL training modules based on market needs and older workers, to address the mismatches between unmet job vacancies and the skills profiles of older unemployed people.
- Ban unwarranted mandatory retirement ages as recommended by the European Commission in its White Paper on Pensions to enable older workers to stay in employment at least until statutory retirement age and even longer if they so wish.

Social inclusion and fight against poverty:

- Guarantee an adequate old age minimum income and adopt an EU Directive on minimum income for all.
- Agree specific objectives for the reduction of old age poverty per age group (65-79 and 80+) and per gender. Report back annually on the poverty rate among older people in NSRs, including the number of older people who are facing severe material deprivation and those who are just above the poverty line, to provide a better assessment of the impact of the crisis and of pension reforms on older people's risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- Develop a new methodology based on a basket of goods and services that older people (65-79 and 80+) need to live a dignified old age and use it to assess the adequacy of pension and other income. This would allow policy makers to better assess pension adequacy in terms of purchasing power given that benefits-in-kind such as free access to health care, subsidized transport, fuel payments, etc. are under threat.
- Adopt and implement ambitious Erasmus For All and Digital Agenda programmes to support non-vocational LLL for older people, through better support for the not-for-profit organisations engaged in that field, as a means to empower older people to participate fully in society, reduce isolation and the digital divide, and promote wellbeing.
- Adopt an ambitious EU Accessibility Act to ensure that age-friendly housing, transport, new technologies and other essential goods and services will be widely available across the EU by 2020; this would tremendously support the independent living of our ageing population and would lower the demand for social care and assistance for the growing numbers of older people with health problems and limitations.



- Maintain the obligation within the Structural Funds ²to promote non discrimination, the equal participation of disabled people and gender equality; and support the proposed 20% ring-fencing for social inclusion and poverty reduction proposed by the European Commission.

Pensions

- Maintain and foster adequate mandatory state regulated pensions systems based on solidarity and gender equity and do not return to a situation where individuals are forced to take full responsibility for their income in old age.
- Address the specific challenges of transition periods to ensure that no one will be deprived of an adequate income between the time of retirement and the moment they can draw their pension.
- Maintain pensioners' purchasing power in very old age through indexation of public statutory pensions to allow older people to keep up with progress in society and to prevent old age poverty as a result of the erosion of their income over time.
- Speed up work at EU level to ensure an efficient European supervision and regulatory system for financial markets and institutions to provide adequate protection of supplementary pensions systems and individual savings.
- Develop more sophisticated simulation models to assess the impact of pension reforms on women and workers with career breaks, to allow policy makers to address the adequacy challenge in a more equitable way.
- Address the increasing inequalities between women and men in order to reduce the gender pension gap as recommended by the European Commission in its White Paper on Pensions and report back annually in the NSRs on progress achieved.
- When private funded schemes are encouraged or imposed, ensure that they include sufficient contribution credits for career breaks due to care responsibilities, borne mainly by women, together with measures facilitating their return to formal work.
- Combat gender discrimination in the labour market especially by reducing the career and pay gap to reduce the gender pension gap.

² Maintain the General Ex-Ante Conditionality in the Annex IV of the proposal on the General regulation COM (2011) 615 final



Health and long-term care

- Guarantee universal access to quality health and long-term care that is affordable to all, and adequate support for formal and informal carers and volunteer organisations through national strategies.
- Protect social rights for informal carers to improve their financial and social security and address gender inequalities.
- Promote the development of informal carers' counselling services where they can find suitable care solutions for their dependent relatives, emergency and respite care facilities, training and information on carers' rights, etc.
- Recognise that spending on quality eldercare services is an investment which supports the employability of women and older workers (as are childcare provisions) and a growing economic sector, adopt comprehensive LTC strategies that support self-care, and help older people regain their autonomy and maintain control of their lives for as long as possible.
- Address the issues linked to the development of a single market of long-term care services (evolution, protection of users' rights, rules applied in the different countries, etc.) and ensure that the single market develops adequate protection for vulnerable and captive consumers, not only in cross-border provision of long-term care services, through the development of mandatory quality standards for LTC.
- Develop an EU recognition of geriatric specialization for health professionals.
- Use the European Social Fund to develop training modules and EU-wide qualifications for geriatric care assistants to facilitate cross-border mobility for care professionals in lower skilled jobs. Create new job profiles and qualifications for the eldercare sector in a way that allows carers' mobility between care sectors, i.e. between child, elder and disability care as well as cross border.
- Develop e-learning tools for carers on how to detect and fight elder abuse and disseminate them widely across the EU.

AGE members urge the EU institutions and national authorities to follow these recommendations and to seek innovative solutions to our demographic challenge that are fair and sustainable for all generations.

AGE Platform and its members commit to:

- Acknowledge that together with rights, older people have duties towards other generations, society and the communities they live in.



- Help rebuild trust and confidence in the future and invest in sectors that will create jobs and growth.
- Actively promote LLL and age diversity in employment.
- Share their experience and skills with other generations.
- Establish a long-term strategy to promote the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy on Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth and of the European Year 2012 together with their policy makers, encouraging them to follow the recommendations that are listed in this Declaration.
- Run a national campaign to get the support of their national authorities for the Covenant of Mayors and other initiatives under the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing.
- Empower older people to take an active part in policy making and seize opportunities to influence the relevant local and national policies.
- Contribute actively to the development of AGE policy work including through the provision of good and bad practice examples.
- Raise awareness of the contribution that older people have made, make at present, and will continue to make to society and their communities through their voluntary and informal care activities. Promote diversity in society – among and within generations – and actively combat increasing discrimination and xenophobia.

