

Press Mention

Filip Hamro-Drotz interview on AGE Manifesto by the journalist Hanna Ojanpää

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Eu Elections: AGE Manifesto calls for action for a more equal Age Europe

People over 65 already account for more than a fifth of the European population. In the forthcoming European elections, the role and rights of older people will be highlighted by candidates and voters alike. The AGE network plays a major role in this work.

Almost 450 million people live in the European Union. There are around 95 million people over 65, just over a fifth. In 2050, the proportion is projected to rise to 30% (Eurostat, 1/2023, European Commission).

So when we talk about older people in Europe, we are talking about a significant population group.

- But we prefer to talk about seniors rather than older people. And we prefer to talk about people with years of experience," says Filip Hamro-Drotz.

Europe is for all ages

Hamro-Drotz is a member of the Svenska Pensionärsförbundet (SPF) responsible for international affairs. The SPF is a member of EETU, the representative organisation of pensioners' associations, which represents some 250 000 Finnish pensioners through its member organisations.

The SPF is also one of nearly 100 organisations that are part of the AGE Platfom Europe network, which was set up in 2001.

- AGE is a politically neutral and independent lobby for seniors in the EU. Our secretariat is based in Brussels and from there we are in close contact with the European Commission. Demographic ageing has major implications that can no longer be ignored. We act as the representative of national older people's organisations and as a voice for every ageing European," says Hamro-Drotz, who sits on the AGE Board.

The EU's framework programme on ageing, published in 2021, launched a debate on how to take better account of demographic ageing in EU initiatives and policies. AGE has been and continues to be involved in a number of EU-funded projects, including the preparation of the Ageing Equality and Care Strategies. However, at the moment, the main focus is the EU elections in June. To this end, AGE published a manifesto for the European Parliament on 24 January 2024.

- In the Manifesto, we highlight our three key objectives: implementing the age equality strategy, inclusive ageing and ensuring the well-being and care of older people. These goals include, for example, combating age discrimination, the UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons, solidarity between generations and the right to self-determination and dignity in end-of-life care and calls for candidates to include these themes in their programmes and keep them on their agendas, also when the time comes to take concrete action - Hamro-Drotz lists.

The right to a good old age

Hamro-Drotz considers the challenges faced by older people in Finland to be very similar to those in other European countries. One of the most important of these is enforced loneliness.

- This is something that needs to be addressed," he stresses. "However, as the EU often remains a distant actor at the level of the individual, the importance of local actors and safety nets is growing.

Hamro-Drotz highlights digitalisation as the second common European challenge for the everyday life of the ageing population. He calls for more solutions from EU policy makers on ethical guidelines and supervision of digitalisation.

- It should also be possible to perform basic societal functions, such as services provided by public authorities and financial institutions, in a non-digital way, as well as organising home care, for example. The ability of older people to use digital devices, starting with smartphones, should also be addressed.
  As an advocacy organisation, we are not putting a spanner in the works for the development of society. On the contrary, we are looking ahead and want to play a role in helping society to develop in a more equal direction in this respect too - to make digitalisation easily accessible to all.

On a larger scale, Hamro-Drotz points out that the starting point for the debate is the inevitable life cycle of human beings. He deplores attitudes that speak of older people as a single group. "In reality, we are talking about a very heterogeneous group of people with a huge amount of experience and knowledge to offer. Seniors play a key role in inter-generational interaction, volunteering, and as consumers and taxpayers. We should therefore be seen as an asset rather than a cost.

Hamro-Drotz himself says he has always been interested in the idea of civil society.

- Personally, it is important to me that people of different ages are seen and heard. It starts with something as simple as kindness and respect for each other. We need the courage to speak up, not to remain silent. For me, making a difference has become a part of life and it also gives me enormous strength and substance; the knowledge that at least you are trying," concludes Filip Hamro-Drotz.

Filip Hamro-Drotz Interview

The Confederation of Swedish-Speaking Pensioners in Finland | AGE Member

You can stop the perpetuation of ageism!

Please read our one-pager on communicating on older persons in a non-stereotypical way.

About AGE Platform Europe

AGE Platform Europe is the largest European network of non-profit organizations of and for older people. We elevate older people's voice, bringing their experience and aspirations to the table to celebrate ageing and fight for equality at all ages.

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