

Roadmap on the Green Paper on Ageing Feedback from AGE Platform Europe 14 December 2020

AGE welcomes the commitment made by President von der Leyen to open a debate on demographic ageing which has been for too long the elephant in the room: everyone was ignoring it while it had started to deeply transform our societies. We have both increasing longevity, ageing European societies, but also an age-segregated society where age groups do not meet, do not know each other, do not recognise their common views and interests. It is time to act.

We strongly believe that addressing ageism in both sides of the spectrum (ageism experienced by younger people and older people) is essential to pay tribute to the value each individual brings to our societies, reinforce solidarity between generations and enable everyone to participate without any barrier.

Seizing the momentum

The COVID-19 pandemic operates as a wake-up call, shedding light on issues that are not new, like the lack of ambition to build quality long-term care systems. We are also witnessing how easy it can be to pit generations against each other, while solidarity, notably across generations, has proved to be the right answer. **Taking lessons from this crisis is therefore essential to make sure we do not repeat the past errors.**

The [Conclusions adopted by the Council of the European Union on 9 October 2020](#) on “Human Rights, Participation and Well-Being of Older Persons in the Era of Digitalisation” already provides **options to be included in the Green Paper**. To name only one which is crucial for AGE: the conclusions call to consider a chapter on the human rights of older persons in the Green Paper, considering notably the gender and disability perspective. It seems that this call is also part of the Trio Presidency Declaration on Ageing, a key document ensuring continuity between the legacy of the German Presidency and the forthcoming Portuguese and Slovenian Presidencies.

What do we expect from the Green Paper?

Change the narrative and reinforce the human rights-based approach

Ageing is not a problem: it is a natural process and a universal experience. Longevity is one of the greatest achievements of humankind¹. It is ageism, meaning the socially constructed stereotypes and ensuing discrimination that must be challenged, so we can come together and enjoy the same rights regardless of our age, to remain equal as we get older.

¹ See notably the figures highlighted by the WHO in its proposal for a Decade of Healthy Ageing: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/documents/decade-of-health-ageing/decade-ageing-proposal-en.pdf?Status=Temp&sfvrsn=b0a7b5b1_12



As underlined by the Council in its conclusions², the European Union is committed to preserve human rights regardless of age and the Charter of Fundamental Rights³ frames clear obligations for the European Union and its Member States, notably in relation to the rights of older people (article 25 of the Charter). The Treaty on the European Union calls furthermore in article 3 for the Union to uphold the value of solidarity between generations. **The Green Paper is therefore an opportunity to apply this rights-based approach in practice.** For example, by considering among the different issues to be covered the impact of the digitalisation on the rights of older people to access basic services.

Examples of questions to be included in the consultation:

- *What initiatives shall be put in place to ensure a true implementation of article 25 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights?*
- *What initiatives (including legislation) should the European Union and its Member States undertake to fill the gap in the protection of equality in old age, and eventually to ensure that everyone can live and age as they wish?*

Tackle socio-economic inequalities and discrimination across life

We strongly support a life-course approach that is indispensable to combat socio-economic inequalities – that turn to be social determinants of health as well as drivers of well-being – and the intersectionality of discrimination. Combating socioeconomic inequalities at all ages in the intersection with other discrimination grounds is the best way to build equality and health in older life. It is also a way to ease socio-economic tensions created by demographic change, by enabling the economic and non-economic contribution of older persons to societies, lowering the costs for health and long-term care and raising revenues for pension systems. **It is essential to make sure the Green Paper on Ageing will consider social policies and social protection as investment to build resilient societies and tackle inequalities across life course.**

Examples of questions to be included in the consultation:

- *How should the European Union and its Member States build services and environments that support autonomy and independence for all, taking into account the rapid digitalisation of our societies?*
- *How can the growing share of older people best be supported to contribute economically and in non-economic activities?*
- *How could adequacy of old-age income including minimum income be secured?*
- *How should gender gaps in pensions and old-age poverty be tackled?*
- *What can the European Union and its Member States do to ensure health systems including long-term care, being more efficient, including to tackle health inequalities?*

² <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11717-2020-REV-2/en/pdf>

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>

Propose a comprehensive strategy to overcome the silos

The Green Paper is a timely opportunity to reinforce the strategic approach of the EU on ageing issues, working across domains and thus overcoming the silos that prevent to embrace the opportunities and challenges offered by demographic ageing. The nomination of a Vice-President in charge of Democracy and Demography is an important step that should also be reflected within the structure of the European Commission's services and the deployment of a strategy dedicated to ageing and its mainstreaming into other EU equality and social strategies and plans. **The Green Paper on Ageing should launch a debate around such a strategy, its aim and scope and, also to reflect on data collection on ageing, notably on older people and the oldest old, where we lack hard evidence for cross-country comparisons and recommendations.**

Examples of questions to be included in the consultation:

- *Do you consider a European strategy on ageing as a good policy option to ensure stronger coordination of EU and national initiatives in relation to ageing?*
- *What should such a strategy entail?*
- *What are the main data gaps in relation to older people and how could better data collection help to address key issues?*
- *What would be the external policy dimension of a strategy addressing demographic change in the global context?*

Conclusion

AGE is very much committed to propose concrete actions and a way forward on how to address ageing issues at EU level. Together with our members, we are developing a strong and detailed contribution to the Green Paper based on our 20 years of experience to nourish the debate and make sure it will be followed by a White Paper giving clear and concrete policy options.

About us:

AGE Platform Europe (AGE) is the largest European Union network of organisations of and for older persons. Funded by European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice, we aim at voicing and promoting the rights and interests of the 190 million inhabitants aged 50+ in the EU. Through our membership we represent more than 40 million older persons across the EU.

Contact person: Julia Wadoux, Policy Coordinator, Julia.wadoux@age-platform.eu