

Seize the potential of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing to strengthen equality, fairness and cohesion across an ageing Europe!

AGE General Assembly 2016 Final Declaration

AGE Platform Europe members met at their 2016 General Assembly to call on European Institutions, EU Member States, local and regional authorities to use all relevant policy frameworks including at global level to address effectively age discrimination, while strengthening adequately the full spectrum of older people's rights.

Respect and enjoyment of human rights by everyone is a fundamental feature of our democratic societies. **The right to be respected and treated with dignity**, to take part and be included in society may look fairly natural to some people, but **can be a real challenge for some members of our ageing population**. This is all the more true in these tough economic times, when fundamental rights tend to be overshadowed by economic concerns. Older people should not be denied the opportunities to participate in society and benefit from economic and social developments. The significant social and economic contributions older people bring to our societies, to younger generations, to companies and to various intergenerational projects should be acknowledged.

The persistent economic and social crisis impoverishing whole groups of our societies, including older people, combined with the baby-boomers' demographic pressure, and most recently the refugee crisis, the growing fear of terrorist attacks, the referendum on UK membership in the European Union, should all lead the EU to reconsider its core objectives, organisation and functioning.

For the benefit of today and tomorrow's older persons, AGE members reconfirm their commitment to support the EU to reconnect with its citizens and create a forward looking society where everyone has a role to play, is valued and supported to lead an active dignified life regardless of age, gender, race or ethnic origin, religion, disability or sexual orientation.

This requires adopting comprehensive, coordinated and progressive policies to address all aspects of population ageing, building on relevant existing initiatives, including the current review of the **Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA or Madrid Plan)**. Therefore we submit the following recommendations on what should be achieved to better protect the rights of older people in this time of complex institutional, social and economic contexts in the EU and at global level.

For the full text of AGE General Assembly recommendations, please see following pages.



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Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing must support the respect of human rights of older people

Older people's rights are gaining momentum at international level with the on-going debate on how to improve their protection on the ground, in particular thanks to the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), the recommendation of the Council of Europe on the promotion of human rights of older persons; the work of the Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Older Persons and the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing. AGE welcomes these developments, but urges the European Union to build on this positive work-in-progress and to develop adequate mechanisms to promote and protect older people's rights. In the meantime, the MIPAA should be better used to monitor how far older people can equally enjoy their human rights and what is the real impact of the existing framework on their lives. Monitoring should be complemented by positive actions to empower older people to develop skills and knowledge necessary to exercise their active citizenship.

While the MIPAA is not a human rights instrument it has the potential to address various challenges older people face from their socio-economic activities to cultural, civic and political participation. Contrary to other existing policy process on ageing, the MIPAA contains a number of references relevant to human rights of older people. However, despite this important progress, the MIPAA is neither comprehensive nor fully adequate to address older people's needs and protect their rights.

In view of contributing to the 2017 review of the MIPAA Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) for Europe, AGE analysed the level of advancements in the implementation of the Plan at subnational levels, national. Regretting the low-profile of the Plan within national policy agendas and the overall lack of involvement of older persons, their organisations or other relevant stakeholders (e.g. equality bodies, NHRIs, researchers, private sector) in this process, AGE General Assembly 2016 urges the European Union and national governments, in particular to:

- Increase awareness about the Plan and involve external actors, in particular older persons, in its implementation, monitoring and eventual reformulation of the objectives;
- Ensure that all current and future socio-economic reforms, in particular those taken in the framework of the European Semester pay due attention to their potential impact on vulnerable groups, help fight ageism in all areas of life, and ultimately allow older persons to live in dignity and participate equally in society;
- Recognise and address the particular challenges older people across the EU face with regard to: adequate income to live in dignity; access to employment with support of life-long learning; social networks to fight loneliness and stimulate social participation;



accessible, affordable and quality health and long-term care; and access to goods and services regardless of age criterion;

- Follow the recommendation of the UN Independent Expert on the rights of older persons calling for a new binding instrument, such as an international convention, to highlight the specific barriers that older people face in respect of their human rights while considering in what ways the existing UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities could already be applied to older people;
- Follow the recent call from the UNECE for active strategies to meet older migrants' economic, social and healthcare needs – in order to address the increasing international mobility and migration of people at an older age;
- Apply a rights-based approach in the implementation of all domains covered by the MIPAA in view of promoting and protecting the rights of older persons in all national plans, policies and laws;
- Use an evidence-based approach to policy-making on ageing and develop common indicators in the context of MIPAA objectives. Greater emphasis should be given to social and not only to economic indicators and to the positive impact social measures may have on the economy. Qualitative indicators should be promoted and complement quantitative indicators at national and EU level to reflect a comprehensive and exhaustive definition and understanding of the notion of quality of life across the life course.
- Mainstream in the implementation of the MIPAA the quantitative targets and indicators on social protection set by other policy frameworks, e.g. the Europe 2020 Strategy headline targets, the Active Ageing Index developed by the European Commission and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), or what will follow as proposals from the consultation on the EU Pillar of Social Rights;
- Promote the MIPAA to make it visible, transparent and connected to all relevant governmental actions and initiatives which impact Europe's ageing population and the lives of older persons. This will increase ownership of the process among the relevant actors and facilitate its implementation at all levels;
- Introduce monitoring and accountability mechanisms in order to evaluate progress achieved across all MIPAA objectives and its Regional Implementation Strategy. Having made progress in some areas, the Plan's implementation has been very fragmented and uneven and did not help to achieve tangible results across all its objectives;



- Remove barriers to the participation of older people and their organisations in the monitoring and implementation of the Plan (via more transparency and genuine consultation mechanism) in view of using its full potential to build consensus among all stakeholders on how to create an inclusive society for all ages. This should ensure that persons are able to age with security and dignity and continue to participate in society as citizens with full rights.

AGE Platform Europe and its members commit to engage in a constructive dialogue with the European Union and their respective national governments and authorities to carry out the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

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