



ANNUAL REPORT 2015

**Promoting
Older People's Rights
in Europe**



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For a short presentation of our mission, vision and objectives, please see [our pdf leaflet](#)

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Forewords



Marjan Sedmak

President of AGE Platform Europe

2015 was not an easy year, it was a demanding year, but summing up, it was twice as rewarding. In year 2015, AGE Platform Europe had to repeat some old answers to old questions, and find many answers to a lot of new questions as well. And we again realized that we all are better off when representative democracy goes hand in hand with the participatory democracy; when the established politics goes hand in hand with the civil society and the government with the community. And we could anew realize that the written law, *fixo aere*, fixed in bronze, as Ovidius wrote more than 2000 years ago, remains imperfect without high ethical standards.

The pages that follow in this volume bear witness of the work done in the past year. Not for the first time in the last 15 years, AGE Platform Europe had to convince the renovated European institutions of its importance in the democratic exchange of ideas and suggestions, needed in the entirety of the decision making processes. Sometimes it is difficult to measure successful achievements in these areas, but is there any better and more substantiated proof of the success of the effort than the establishment of the European Covenant of Demographic Change in December 2015 and the high number of the stakeholders ready to participate? With the Covenant we realized that age friendly environment is “everybody-friendly” environment, and that generations, living apart, are less prosperous than generations living together.

Eight years ago the economic crisis broke out and brought many unpleasant surprises particularly to older generations, to those who with decades of hard work brought enormous wealth to Europe and who rightly expected to enjoy their old age in accordance with their contributions to the wealth of their nation. And who still contribute, mostly unnoticed, to the welfare of their families, neighbourhood and communities. The echoes of the crisis still didn't calm down when we are confronted with the new face of it – refugees knocking on our door looking for a safe harbour. And we have to realize – and to understand – that we are living now in one world, that the human catastrophes, wars, famine, are not happening somewhere far away,

and that even geographically distant they can fatally knock on our door. Older people and children are victims of these tragedies, too. We are living in one world and all these tragedies turned out to bear responsibility, too. Therefore, as a famous author, Ernest Hemingway, refreshed John Donne's poem from 16th century, we have to remember: No man is an island, entire of itself... and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

Anne-Sophie Parent

Secretary-General of AGE Platform Europe



2015 : the first year of AGE new triennial strategic plan toward an age-friendly EU

2015 was a new start for AGE with a new European Parliament in place, a new European Commission devoted to a new set of priorities and the new Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) programme supporting our policy work. What was new as well, at least in its intensity, was the increasingly challenging situation both within and outside Europe which impacted us all.

In 2015, social and economic indicators in many countries sent gloomy messages reflecting the difficulties faced by more and more citizens in Europe who have to cope with drastic cuts in social protection and struggle to maintain decent living conditions in a rapidly changing world.

Yet, 2015 also brought some progress in the political acknowledgement that society has to adapt to its demographic challenge and can do that in a positive way that will be fair to all generations.

All in all 2015 was a very busy year for AGE as you will read in this report: all along the year with the support of our members and experts, we raised awareness of what can be done to protect older people's rights as citizens, workers, consumers and patients at EU, United Nations and Council of Europe levels, supporting our members' efforts to improve the situation of older people at grass root level.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this annual report and look forward to hearing from you if you have any question or comment on AGE work.

In 2015, AGE...

- (co-)organised about 10 external events, some of which in cooperation with the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the European Commission and key EU social networks;
- took part in about 160 key EU and national events as speaker, moderator or rapporteur;
- coordinated 14 task forces involving more than 400 experts nominated by AGE members on diverse ageing related issues
- organised 9 statutory meetings and 11 task force meetings (6 face-to-face and 5 virtual)
- sent 10 monthly newsletters, CoverAGE, including 10 Special Briefings, to more than 2.000 direct recipients;
- welcomed 41.836 visitors on its website;
- reached more than 2.350 followers on Twitter and 21.734 people on Facebook;
- issued 19 press releases and 14 newsflashes on various EU and international key events or policy developments;
- produced 41 policy positions, updates and analysis including joint with other NGOs and stakeholders;
- answered 8 EU and global consultations on diverse issues which have an impact on older people;
- participated in 19 various consultative groups or advisory boards set up by:

The European Commission:

DG Health and Consumer Affairs and DG Communications Networks, Content and Technology:

- Action Group D4 of the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (DG SANCO and CONNECT)
- e-Health Stakeholders Group

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion:

- European Pensions Forum (DG EMPL)

DG Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union:

- Financial Services User Group (DG FISMA)

DG Growth:

- Expert Group on Senior Tourism

DG Communications Networks, Content and Technology

European Multistakeholder Platform on ICT Standardisation

DG SANTE

- EU Health Policy Forum

The European Central Bank:

- The Euro Retail Payment Board and its WG on contactless payments and WG on instant payments

The European Economic and Social Committee

- Liaison group with NGOs

The European Fundamental Rights Agency

- Fundamental Rights Platform

The European Medicines Agency

- WG of Patients and Consumers Working Parties

The European Railway Agency

- WG on Technical Specification on Interoperability – Persons with Reduced Mobility

The European consumer voice in standardization - ANEC

- Design For All Working Group

CEN-CENELEC

- Strategic Advisory Group on Accessibility and Joint Working Group 5 – Mandate 473 on Design for All

The Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme

- Member of the Advisory Board of AAL Programme

More Years Better Lives Joint Initiative Programme

- Member of the Societal Advisory Board

The United Nations (UN)

- Member of the Advisory Group of the Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE) Generations and Gender Programme
- Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG)

The Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People

- Steering Group of the Alliance

Council of Europe

- International Conference of NGOs (iNGOs)

Highlights of the Year



■ Promoting a rights-based approach on older people's issues

In 2015 AGE set out to assess the impact of EU's and Member States policies on the rights of older persons. Throughout our policy work we flagged situations of ageism, discrimination, abuse, social exclusion and poverty but also good practices which promote a positive vision of old age and which view older people as individuals with rights instead of welfare recipients. We worked to raise awareness of the relevance of equality in the context of demographic ageing and limited resources, and to empower older people to hold their governments accountable for respecting their fundamental rights. Based on our members' feedback, we flagged that the national reforms in pensions, health and long-term care are likely to increase poverty, inequalities and social exclusion of older people, and called on the European Union to rebalance its fiscal and fundamental rights objectives, including through the adoption of the much-needed Equal Treatment Directive. We delivered an online handbook aimed to make older people aware of their human rights and showcase how they can effectively organize to claim them. We also prepared a toolkit for decision-makers at all levels, which explains what a rights-based approach to care is and why it makes a difference. Moreover we strengthened our collaboration with the Council of Europe, the European Union and the United Nations, organizing common actions that, on the one hand, evaluated the current state of affairs and, on the other hand, discussed ways to address existing gaps in the protection and promotion of the rights of older persons. This year's achievements pave the way for the work that we will do in 2016 to mainstream the rights of older people across all EU policies, including by improving the capacity of our members to monitor human rights violations at grassroots level and evaluating the outcomes of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

■ Campaign on age-friendly environments - Launch of EU Covenant for Demographic Change

In 2012 AGE launched the Campaign “Towards and Age-Friendly EU by 2020” with the goal to shape a fair and sustainable society for all ages. Following the European Year 2012



for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP AHA) offered a key platform for AGE to promote age-friendly environments. Thanks to its active involvement in this process, AGE managed to raise awareness and gather support for a Covenant on Demographic Change that will create the necessary political and technical framework to support active and healthy ageing and develop age-friendly environments across the European Union.

From February 2014 to January 2016, AGE coordinated a project called "AFE-INNOVNET" (Thematic Network on Innovation for Age-Friendly Environments), funded by the European Commission DG CONNECT. The overarching goal of this thematic network was to set up a large EU-wide community of local and regional authorities and other relevant stakeholders who want to work together to find smart and innovative solutions to support active and healthy ageing and develop age-friendly environments across the European Union. Over two years, the Thematic Network gathered more than 350 stakeholders, including AGE members, developed key tools to support local and regional authorities willing to develop age-friendly environments and organised many workshops, meetings, events and webinars to facilitate networking and synergies. It created the framework to officially launch the EU Covenant on Demographic Change in which AGE members have been actively involved - notably through the task force on mobilisation for age-friendly environments - and will continue to support in order to strengthen the link between organisations of older people and local and regional authorities.

The global context in 2015 was also supportive for the EU Covenant on Demographic Change with the focus of the 2015 United Nations Older People’s Day on urban environment and the key report released by the World Health Organization (WHO) on Ageing and Health. And 2016 will be a key year for the review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA).

AGE work in 2015 to promote...

■ Mobilisation for an Age-Friendly EU

2015 was a very active year for AGE with regard to the promotion of age-friendly environments thanks to the work conducted through the [AFE-INNOVNET project](#) (Thematic Network on Innovation for Age-Friendly Environments) to prepare for the launch of the EU Covenant on Demographic Change, and also through our cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO):



- AGE became an institutional affiliate of the [WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities](#) and thus committed to contribute to this key network to support active and healthy ageing at grassroots level;
- Helen Campbell (AGE Vice-President, Age & Opportunity, Ireland), represented AGE at the [Second WHO Global Forum on Innovation for Ageing Population](#) (Kobe, Japan, 7-9 October 2015);
- AGE actively participated in the consultation organized by WHO on the global strategy to implement the World report on ageing and health, of which age-friendly environments are key components.
- AGE supports WHO #YearsAhead campaign which seeks to challenge ageism – the discrimination and stereotyping of people based on their age

AGE members were also very supportive at local level to disseminate the key messages of the campaign on age-friendly environments and to recruit members for the Covenant on Demographic Change. For example, Ebbe Johanssen, AGE Vice-President (DanAge, Denmark), participated in a live session with Danish municipalities on 7 December, making a direct link between the official launch of the EU Covenant on Demographic Change and this key Danish event for local authorities. Andrea Ferenczi from the Older Women Network (Hungary) supported the work done by AGE in Hungary by translating and disseminating material in Hungarian. Jean-Christophe Merle from ACLAP (France) worked at local level to recruit new members for the EU Covenant on Demographic Change among municipalities of Southern France.

Age-Friendly Environments are very much embedded at EU level now into the emerging EU Silver Economy Strategy in which AGE and its members were also very active:

- Fifteen AGE experts were involved in the [EU Summit on Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing](#) in March 2015, to which AGE was an associated partner;
- BAGSO (German AGE member) offered a strong support for organizing a session dedicated to Age-Friendly Environments during the [German Seniors Fair](#) (Frankfurt, July 2015);
- Anne-Sophie Parent (AGE Secretary General) and David Sinclair (ILC-UK, United Kingdom) were key speakers at an event organized during the [Open Days on the Silver Economy and the role of regions](#) (14 October 2015).

Last but not least, AGE worked together with the European Parliament in order to gain political support for age-friendly environments and the EU Covenant on Demographic Change. Thanks to AGE, the EP report on assessment of the outcomes of the European Year 2012 and the EP report on the implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights both call on the European Commission to support the Covenant on Demographic Change which is presented as one of the main outcomes of the EY2012.

■ European Semester

In 2015, like previous years, AGE monitored the implementation of national reforms in the context of the European Semester, with a particular focus on their impact on older people's lives, e.g. in terms of employment of older workers, old age income, access to and affordability of social services, etc. In this assessment, AGE involved for the first time experts on health and long term care.



In [our analysis](#), addressed in a letter to the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, AGE expressed concerns about the reduction of healthy life years since 2010 in some countries, calling for investment in long-term care and health infrastructure. Our members' feedback also brought further evidence of the persistence of age discrimination in employment, the high number of older unemployed and inactive people, as well as the unequal impact of pension reforms on men and on women. In September 2015, AGE published its analysis of the country reforms and the Commission's recommendations in 11 member states.

AGE also continued its work within the [European Semester Alliance](#), a group of NGOs working on the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Through a series of [common statements](#), the Alliance denounced the Commission's overwhelming focus on economic governance in its recommendations to member states, to the detriment of social investment and adequate social protection for population and age groups in need.

■ Human Rights

Improving the capacity of older people's organisations to claim their rights



On the occasion of the International Day of Older Persons on 1st October 2015, AGE launched a [handbook](#) that aims to enhance knowledge on how human rights can be a tool to advocate for older people's challenges, such as access to pension, long-term care and accessibility, and to improve older people's participation in all processes that concern them. This online publication primarily targets associations of and for older persons empowering them to use the human rights framework for their domestic advocacy and policy work. Currently including detailed information around processes of the United Nations (UN), this handbook will be further updated in the next years to explain the human rights mechanisms of the Council of Europe and the European Union.

Joining forces for the adoption of the horizontal equal treatment directive

In 2015 AGE continued its active involvement in the NGO coalition '[Equality for All](#)', which calls for the adoption of the horizontal non-discrimination directive. This initiative represents millions of EU citizens at risk of discrimination, i.e. women, persons with disabilities, younger and older people, LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersexual) persons, members of ethnic, religion and belief communities as well as persons with a migration background. Through joint statements, events, media coverage and meetings with State representatives, the European Parliament and the Vice-President of the European Commission Timmermans, we increased awareness of the widespread discrimination faced by millions of persons in the EU and the 'costs of inequality' for European countries.

Defending the rights of older people with functional limitations

AGE intensified its efforts to address the injustice faced by older people who require support in their everyday lives, calling for an equal application of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) across the life

course. On a number of occasions we commented on the lack of involvement of older people in the implementation of this instrument and called on the European Union and the Committee which oversees the UNCRPD to address the specific situation of older people with functional limitations. Thanks to our [input](#) the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on social protection includes references to older persons. AGE was also involved in a project on the rights of older people in need of care, which is coordinated by the European Network of National Human Rights Institutes and co-organised a [two-day high-level event](#) discussing how to apply in practice the rights of older people who face impairments, frailty or dementia and who are at high risk of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation.

Contributing to the work of the United Nations on the rights of older persons

In April 2015, AGE Platform Europe was [granted special consultative status](#) by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This status comes with many advantages as it gives the organisation privileged access to UN mechanisms and increases the visibility of our work across the United Nations (UN) system. Last year, we also strengthened our collaboration with the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons. Thanks to information gathered by AGE members, [we flagged](#) the low awareness and limited consultation of older people in the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA). We also [contributed](#) to the Expert's call for good practices, highlighting EU-level initiatives. The Independent Expert also met with AGE representatives in New York and provided a foreword for our online 'Older persons' self-advocacy handbook'. For the fourth year, AGE took an active part in the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing, where we had speaking roles in side events and brought forward existing gaps in the protection of older people across the EU. Together with other civil society organisations [we called for](#) the drafting of a UN Convention on the rights of older persons and the improved application of existing laws and policies at grassroots level.

Replying to global human rights challenges

Bearing in mind the terrorist threats and attacks across the EU, the refugee crisis and the increase of xenophobia and islamophobia, [AGE called on](#) the EU and its member states to agree on a common EU strategy respectful of EU values and human rights standards. AGE members are alarmed by the rise of fundamentalism and radicalization that is threatening EU's democratic values, and call for avoiding further stigmatization while strengthening fundamental rights and equality within the European Union.

■ Employment of older workers

Fighting Age-discrimination

In 2015 AGE continued to monitor the application of the EU Directive against discrimination in employment matters, going beyond open discrimination in job advertisements. Although the employment rates of 55-65 year-olds are improving, nearly half of the EU population in this age group does not work. AGE therefore [called for](#) more investments into trainings and skills, especially for the long-term unemployed, as the Commission proposed a recommendation on services to fight long-term unemployment. AGE welcomed the initiative, aiming at better employment services, but deplored the lack of initiative on life-long learning and vocational trainings for older workers.



Improving work-life balance

AGE also monitored the developments on the balance between work and family life. AGE collaborated on a [major document](#) published by the European network of families' organisations, COFACE, on this topic, assembling good practices throughout Europe. AGE also handed in a [common answer](#) to the consultation on the directive on working time together with COFACE. AGE's response to the consultation for a new gender equality strategy after 2015 included many references to provisions for improving work-life balance for older women.

Promoting occupational health

Working up until retirement age means also to stay healthy until this age. Therefore, AGE collaborated with the EU Agency for Health and Safety at Work in their two-year campaign '[Healthy workplaces manage stress](#)' and collaborated with the agency in the creation of the next campaign, focusing on working at any age. AGE also worked with the European Parliament on a report on the framework for health and safety at work, to ensure older workers' issues are regarded in this strategy.

■ Active Citizenship

After an intense year in 2014 with the mobilization of AGE members and network on the European elections and the renewal of the European Commission, the year 2015 was used to capitalize on AGE's



experience of participatory approaches and to raise awareness on the outcomes and the lessons learned from our policy and projects activities.

AGE released a [Capacity building toolkit for older people and their organisations](#) to influence European and national policies. This tool provides step-by-step guidance for managing (from planning to evaluation) a campaign for an age-friendly European Union. The toolkit includes background information on ageing and why we need an age-friendly European Union; an action model that can be adapted to a wide range of campaigns; tips and tricks to help you plan and assess your strategies and actions; and tools to implement specific advocacy actions. It aims to be a good starting point for any organisation of older people wishing to promote a more positive vision of ageing and of older people, and come with concrete proposals on how to do it. It gives you some ideas on where to start, how to build your case and how to spread the message. The toolkit takes inspiration from the outcomes of the Active Senior Citizens for Europe, AFE-INNOVNET and INNOVAGE projects.

AGE also contributed to the EU Citizenship report, in which each year the European Commission lists priority actions to eliminate barriers in the exercise of EU citizenship rights.

At the end of 2015 the Commission launched a consultation allowing EU citizens to share experiences and opinions about the challenges that they face as they work, live, travel or study in the European Union. [AGE Platform Europe replied to this consultation](#) highlighting the specific issues faced by older EU citizens. These include aspects of age discrimination, such as age limits in travel insurance or car rental - that impede senior tourism and the accessibility of goods and services - and inequalities in the taxation of pension income when people decide to retire in another member state.

AGE involvement in EU projects to promote senior citizenship

AGE was a member of the Advisory Board of the [DISCIT project on active citizenship for persons with disabilities](#) and we took part in the final conference of the project stressing the barriers faced by older people with functional limitations.

In the [MoPAct](#) project, AGE participated in webinars highlighting good practices for the inclusion of senior citizen in local governance processes, namely from the previous project [Active Senior Citizens in Europe](#) in which AGE was involved in 2013 and 2014.

AGE also took part in the advisory board of [EVARS](#), a project promoting volunteering among senior citizens in Denmark by training them and making them multipliers for senior volunteering in their communities.

■ Adequate Income and fight against poverty in old age



In the field of pensions and adequate income, AGE continued its reflection on old-age minimum income schemes. AGE experts participated in a conference held by the National Observatory of Poverty and Social Exclusion in France to discuss **reference budgets** as a tool to measure the adequacy of public income and non-income benefits. AGE pledged in favour of taking non-monetary aspects into account in reference budgets, such as access to quality health and long-term care services, education and long life learning, decent housing, etc., to show the way autonomy and individual competences can be strengthened

As the Luxembourgish Council presidency and the European Institute for Gender Equality worked on the **gender pension gap** and the EU Parliament released a report on the financial situation of older women living alone, AGE had several opportunities to highlight the challenges of older women in their incomes. The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17 October offered us a further occasion to raise the issue of gender inequality with regard to poverty risk in old age in a [press statement](#) and we also contributed to the [consultation on gender equality in social security](#), an area which is covered by a directive from the 1970s including many exceptions for women.

AGE had the opportunity to highlight challenges of income security in the **EU's Pension Adequacy Report 2015**, a document prepared by the Social Protection Committee (SPC). AGE was able to annex a statement to the SPC report in view of informing debate at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council configuration (EPSCO) at its meeting in October 2015. AGE pointed to the [challenges linked to recent pension reforms](#) and the gap between women and men in old-age income, still standing at 40% on average in EU28. We also pledged in favour of guaranteeing equal access to affordable services as indispensable condition to strengthen pension adequacy.

AGE also followed the process of the **directive on institutions of occupational retirement provision**, currently negotiated between the Council and the Parliament. This directive aims to make occupational pensions more transferrable, secure and transparent. AGE tried to influence the process to avoid a watering down of information to beneficiaries in the directive.

■ Older consumer rights

In 2015, AGE work on older consumers' rights focused mainly on accessibility issues, promoting the concept of Design-for-All in several relevant EU debates, in particular technical standards for accessibility of rail transport (see below the section on Accessibility and Standardisation). AGE worked also to protect older consumers' rights in access to retail payments and financial services (see below).



Euro Retail Payment Board (ERPB):

Early 2014 AGE joined the [Euro Retail Payment Board](#) soon after this high level group was set up by the European Central Bank. The ERPB replaces the SEPA Council, will help foster the development of an integrated, innovative and competitive market for retail payments in euro in the European Union. AGE is one of the two consumers organisations in the ERPB. Our role is to ensure that older consumers' needs and concerns are taken on board in the ERPB's work and statements. IN 2015 AGE contributed to two ERPB working groups: one on contactless retail payments and one on instant retail payments scheme.

Financial services

In 2015, with the help of its Task forces on Financial services and Adequate Income, AGE contributed older people's views in the framework of the [Financial Services Users' Group](#) set up 5 years ago by DG FISMA to advise the Commission in the preparation of legislation or policy initiatives which affect the users of financial services, provide insight, opinion and advice concerning the practical implementation of such policies; help identify key financial services issues which affect older users of financial services, liaise with and provide information to financial services user representatives and representative bodies at the European Union and national level.

AGE took the lead on the preparation of an EC call for tenders for a FSUG outsourced study on pension decumulation practices which will be finalized in October 2016.

■ Healthy Ageing

In 2015 AGE's work to promote healthy ageing was very much linked to the [European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing \(EIP AHA\)](#), in which AGE largely led the work in relation to age-friendly environments (within the so-called 'D4 Action Group') as a key area to support active and healthy ageing. The work in that area also related to the [AFE-INNOVNET project](#) (see section Mobilisation for an age-friendly EU) and to the launch of the Covenant on Demographic Change.



Moreover AGE actively participated in the consultation organized by the World Health Organization (WHO) following the publication of their [World Report on Ageing and Health](#): this was the opportunity to highlight the work done at EU level, to link up with the EIP AHA, as well as with the Covenant on Demographic Change, and the developments in relation to long-term care.

Considering the high importance of health promotion and disease prevention to support healthy ageing, AGE also supported and endorsed the work done around fall prevention thanks to the [ProFouND project](#), which ran an awareness-raising campaign promoting strength and balance exercise at EU level. The event, co-organized by AGE back to back with its 2015 General Assembly "[Sports and physical activity for active and healthy ageing: The tai chi example](#)", was another good example of how AGE supports health promotion among older people.

On the other side, AGE participated in activities linked to older patients. Indeed, AGE is a member of the Patients and Consumers Working Parties at the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and is represented by Barbro Westerholm (SPF, Sweden). Barbro participated in the meeting and provided the perspective of older people on issues such as pharmacovigilance or the need for medicines to better adapt to the ageing population.

AGE also worked in close collaboration with SCA, a Swedish multinational producing hygiene products for incontinence care, in order to raise the profile of continence care thanks to a survey conducted in four countries. The objective of this cooperation was to better understand the needs of patients and their carers in that particular field which remains a taboo issue.

- **AGE involvement in health related EU projects**



[INNOVAGE](#) - Social Innovation promoting Active and Healthy Ageing, is a European project dedicated to develop and test social innovations for the quality of life and well-being of older people. AGE, as project partner, developed [practical Guidelines on involving older people in social innovation development](#). The guidelines aim to support all social innovation actors including researchers, service providers, professionals, older people organisations, etc. in engaging older people in innovation processes. They offer step-by-step guidance and a practical set of tools and methods, as well as tips and tricks to efficiently involve users and get the most out of their participation.



The [IROHLA](#) project, devoted to health literacy among seniors, showed positive attitudes of older citizens towards the use of e-health applications (transfer of health information and care electronic means) and m-health applications (delivery of healthcare services via mobile devices) for improving and managing their health. Information and communication technology (ICT) can help senior citizens overcome the distance from health centres and support them to understand their health issues, improve their communication with care givers and service providers, and enhance informed decision making. Additionally, technology offers tools necessary for families, communities, healthcare professionals and the healthcare system to assist older people to age healthily.

AGE brought evidence that not everyone is familiar with computers, smart phones and tablets. In addition, we showed that socio-economic status plays an important role in determining understanding of new technologies and the messages it delivers. That is why these factors should not be ignored when designing e-health and m-health applications that aim to contribute to the reduction of both inequalities between different social groups.



AGE Platform Europe was involved in the [HAIVISIO](#) project to help improving the dissemination and exploitation of EU research projects in the areas of active ageing, eHealth and independent living.

HAIVISIO organised several trainings – both webinars and physical trainings – targeting partners and coordinators of European projects. It also organised and took part in several events attended by industries, policymakers and researchers, many of which work in research projects that are under the scope of HAIVISIO. The contact with all these professionals generated valuable information on the ways policymakers can improve the policy environment to foster the impact of research and innovation for independent living and active and healthy ageing. AGE took stock of the

connections and the dissemination activities in the project to deliver its **policy recommendations**: one of the main objectives of HAIVISIO was to highlight the policy changes required to improve the visibility and uptake of the solutions developed by European research projects in the fields of eHealth, active and healthy ageing and independent living. Policy contexts are a key element to facilitate the exploitation of research and the access to the market. The dialogue established with both European projects and policymakers at regional, national and European levels has highlighted the stakes and the changes required in order to achieve the objective of paving the way for the uptake of research and innovation in Europe.



As partner of the [ENGAGED](#) thematic network, AGE organized the project's user forums, exchange events around active and healthy ageing which combined the needs arising from the grassroots level with the most recent European debates on the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP AHA). For instance in Letterkenny, Ireland, the user forum involved directly the local community of youngsters, who interacted with the local seniors, demonstrating once again the very positive outcome of engaging with a broad range of stakeholders and of leaving the door open to debates at various stages of the process, alongside with providing a very valuable intergenerational exchange. Through the project, these approaches and exchanges have been directly addressed to the EIP AHA action groups for improving health and quality of life in our ageing societies.

■ Dignified Ageing

The year 2015 was dedicated to moving the policy debate forward and capitalizing on AGE's experiences, events and projects in the field of long-term care and elder abuse.



An [online toolkit on 'Dignity and wellbeing of older persons in need of care – our shared responsibility'](#) was released to put an emphasis on current international and EU legal and policy frameworks and debates on the rights of older persons in need of care. The toolkit also aims to highlight the realities faced by older persons in care, provide elements of policy response as well as examples of tools to move forward. The toolkit, which will be updated annually, includes key figures, positions and a quiz to get started. Its content was influenced by the annual events organized around the Elder abuse awareness day.

2015 was the **10th Elder abuse awareness day**, and AGE marked the day with the organization of a [joint event on 15-16th June](#) with the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the European Network of National Human Rights institutes. The event aimed to take stock of European and international action to tackle elder abuse and better protect and promote the rights of older people in need of care. The debate focused on the implementation of existing standards, elder abuse and financial exploitation in consumer relations, prevention of mistreatment through training, multi-agency co-operation to tackle elder abuse and support to older victims. Several good practices were introduced as examples of steps to take to effectively tackle elder abuse.

- **Engagement in projects**



AGE took part in the final steps of the [WeDO2](#) project by contributing to its final event and outcome: the [Quality care training package](#). Targeted at a wide range of stakeholders, the training package is easy to use and interactive aiming at a strong involvement from participants. The introductory guide and manual aim to support the trainers in delivering training sessions. The training is organized in three steps: the vision on quality care, the reference documents (the European Quality Framework for Long-Term Care Services and the European Charter for the rights and responsibilities of older persons in need of care and assistance both developed earlier by AGE with the support of the EU), and the follow-up actions.



AGE was also engaged in the [PACE](#) project targeting policies and successful interventions in improving palliative care in long-term care facilities. In 2015, AGE organized with the PACE project team and Alzheimer Europe a [User Forum](#) to gather the views of older persons, persons with Alzheimer and their representative organisations. The forum successfully highlighted essential elements to be included in palliative care policies and practices.



The [SmartCare](#) project was also very active in 2015. This project develops and tests integrated care services in nine different European regions. Thanks to the information uploaded and shared through an online platform, health and social care professionals, as well as informal carers, can coordinate the care they deliver to older people, which is meant to have a positive impact on their quality of life. AGE coordinated the work of the Users' Advisory Board, a body representing end-users and care professionals. AGE took part to all of the six visits to pilot sites that were organized, and where we could

observe good practices on how integrated care can empower older people and their carers.



On 26th January 2015, AGE co-organised a seminar on migrant families in Brussels, as part of [Families and Societies](#), a research project on changing demographics, which seeks to analyse the changes in family patterns and relations in Europe and the interplay with existing public policies in order to contribute to evidence-based policymaking. AGE also contributed to the new PERFAR Policy Database by providing examples of existing databases on social policies and demographics, and published an interview on care and domestic migrant workers with two researchers from the universities of Stockholm and Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona. AGE also worked on co-organising a seminar to take place in January 2016 on the intergenerational linkages in the family and how policies shape them, notably with regards to caring and financial responsibilities.

■ Accessibility and Standardisation

Launch of European Accessibility Act

As key component of age-friendly environments, accessibility is essential to support independent living and universal access, and so avoid the social isolation of older people. This is why AGE was very pleased when the European Commission finally issued the [European Accessibility Act](#) early December 2015. We could then start coordinating with our members in order to prepare



AGE reaction and contribution to the newly proposed directive. This work will be backed up by different experts and informed notably by the participation of AGE into the ANED network (Academic Network of European Disability Experts), in which AGE is represented by Heidrun Mollenkopf, AGE Vice-President (BAGSO, Germany). Another complementary piece of work is the Mandate M473 on Accessibility through a Design for All approach, which is one of the first standardization processes in which AGE is involved as a key stakeholder. The objective of M/473 is to include accessibility following a „Design for all“ perspective in mainstream standards and not to develop specific accessibility standards. It is about providing a mechanism to address accessibility following ‘Design For All’ at the early stage of standard development, from the drafting/design to the final publication of a standard.

Web-accessibility and 'digital inclusion'

The European Accessibility Act is actually very complementary to the web-accessibility directive which is still following the legislative process at EU level and where AGE collaborates both with the [European Disability Forum \(EDF\)](#) and [ANEC](#), the voice of consumers in standardization. To that regard, in the framework of the EIII project ([European Internet Inclusion Initiative](#)) AGE organized [an event](#) hosted by the Committee of the Regions which promoted web-accessibility and involved AGE experts. A number of those experts have helped compile a long list of public websites that are important for older people and test the user testing tool developed within the project.

In relation to the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), the question of inclusion and digital literacy is also very sensitive for older persons. This is why AGE published, together with EDF, [recommendations on an inclusive Digital Single Market](#) highlighting how important accessibility is. The work of AGE in the ICT field is complemented by its participation in the Multi-Stakeholders ICT Standardisation Platform, in which AGE is mainly contributing to the ICT Standardisation Rolling Plan. It lists all the topics identified as EU policy priorities where standardisation, standards, or ICT technical specifications ought to play a key role in the implementation of the policy. It covers technologies of 'horizontal importance', ones whose application have a wide impact across different technical fields, in the context of ICT infrastructures and ICT standardisation. This was the opportunity to highlight the development in relation to ageing.

Accessible cities award

In 2015 the implementation of age-friendly environments at grass-roots level was also very much at the core of AGE activities and our participation in the EU Access City Award was very important in that regard. AGE members were actively involved in national juries in order to provide their expertise and experience regarding accessibility in cities. For 2015 again, AGE was member in the European jury that selects the cities to be awarded, represented in 2015 by Liz Mestheneos (Hellas 50+, Greece and past President of AGE).

Promoting accessible transport

Transport is usually mentioned as one of the key areas by AGE members when it comes to independent living and accessibility. Like in previous years, AGE contributed to the consultation organized by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for the preparation of their International Transport Forum. Michel Riquier (CFR, France) provided input and highlighted how

key the accessibility and affordability of transport is to support the active involvement of older people in society.

In October 2015, AGE organized a [joint event with POLIS](#) (European Cities and regions Networking for Innovative Transport Solutions) and VLEVA (the Flemish Liaison Agency to the EU) in the framework of the Open Days, it was the opportunity not only to promote interesting examples implemented at grassroots level but also to initiate a dialogue between users and local policy makers on accessibility and public transport.

Among other specific issues, AGE is particularly active in the work coordinated by the European Railway Agency (ERA) in relation to the Technical Specification for Interoperability with regards to Persons with Reduced Mobility (TSI PRM). In 2015, the revision of the TSI PRM came to an end and the work to monitor the implementation started with the active participation of two experts of AGE: Peter Rayner from NPC (United Kingdom) and Frans Moltzer, nominated by ANBO (the Netherlands).

■ Senior Tourism

With 55+ year old citizens representing more than 25% of the European population, the European Union feels that the contribution of seniors to the European



tourism industry is significant and should be reinforced to help promote economic growth and jobs in Europe and travel accessibility and safety for all, including the most vulnerable travelers.

However, if the growing number of senior tourists represents a significant economic market potential, they are also a very heterogeneous group and their demand and criteria for choice are far from being obvious.



To help shed light on this topic, AGE Platform launched a European-wide survey to identify their interests and expectations, and gathered more than 900 replies from across Europe in 3 weeks. Conceived within the EU-funded [ESCAPE](#) project, aimed at enhancing existing tourist infrastructure and staff in low season, the survey's analysis offers country-based insights (targeting in particular France, Italy, Cyprus, Greece, Bulgaria and Portugal, project partners' Countries), alongside with widespread trends related to choices when travelling, and provides an overview of older people's approaches to seasonality and preferences for themes and leisure activities. The survey also addressed **intergenerational comparisons, accessibility**

and seamlessness issues, as well as underlined older people's concerns when encountering barriers to their freedom of movement. The [result of this survey](#) allowed the project to deliver ten thematic tourism packages all focusing on quality and safety.

Age-friendly criteria have been explored and determined, so that you can select hotels, accommodation settings, means of transport, attractions, which respect accessibility criteria and other key senior-friendly features. Those facilities and operators complying with these criteria have started joining the ESCAPE Club, recognizing their efforts for ensuring senior-friendly tourism.



AGE Platform Europe works on senior-friendly tourism also in the frame of the OFF TO SPAS project, which aims at developing a Central European transnational balneological tourism product for seniors focusing on two spa destinations, Heviz in Hungary, and Covasna in Romania. AGE members from the Nordic Countries and German-speaking countries have been offered free 4-day trips to both destinations to provide useful feedback to the project partners, thus helping improving the touristic offers to seniors.

Both the ESCAPE and OFF TO SPAS have been granted in the framework on the European Commission's pilot phase '**Senior Tourism Initiative**' to enhance transnational travel for seniors in Europe during off-peak times, contributing to the competitiveness of this market. In particular, strong partnerships between the public and private sector, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is encouraged for offering competitive packages.

DG Growth launched a Call for Expressions of Interest to set up a '**European Union Low Season Tourism Initiative Board**' (EULSTIB) for the period 2015-2016. The board was set up in November 2014 to define a road map for low season tourism addressed to older people, and works in close collaboration with the Commission. Its members are experts from governments, the private sector, European industry, academia and civil society. Mrs. Heidrun Mollenkopf, AGE Vice-President, seats in this Board as representative of AGE Platform Europe.

About AGE network



■ AGE structure

Our action 2015 was supported by AGE structure which is organised in such a way as to reflect its main mission of representing older people's interests and needs across the EU and building their capacity to speak on their own behalf and influence EU policy developments.

Regular meetings with our members and experts were held throughout the year to advance our action 2015 work priorities and implement our work programme, provide input on specific dossiers and address management and organizational issues.

AGE General Assembly: is AGE governing body and is composed of all full member organisations. They met in November to take stock of AGE action in 2015 and decide on the work priorities for the next year building on work and contacts made in 2015.

AGE Council: is composed of national representative(s) elected by AGE Full member organisations in their country. It meets twice a year and is responsible for the overall implementation of the work programme and for policy decisions.

AGE Executive Committee: is composed of the President, four Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer and a Secretary. It meets 4 times a year and is responsible for providing policy guidance and ensuring that the statutes and internal rules are adhered to.

AGE Accreditation Committee: deals with all issues around membership, including new applications for membership and to forward its recommendations to the Council and the General Assembly.

AGE Task Forces: 14 Task Forces informed AGE's work on specific policy dossiers related to age-friendly environments, the European Semester, human rights, employment, citizenship, adequate income, fight against poverty, consumers' rights, financial services, health, dignified ageing, accessibility, standardization, senior tourism. Their members are experts nominated by AGE members. They worked mainly through e-mail exchange and met occasionally in Brussels.

AGE Secretariat: is responsible for the day-to-day management of the association and for liaising with the EU institutions.

■ AGE governing bodies and secretariat

Executive Committee



Mr Marjan Sedmak, President
Slovenia



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Ms Helen Campbell, Vice-
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Alice Siniglaglia, Policy and Project Officer (until July 2015)

Daniel Holmberg, Project Officer (until end of November 2015)

Nathalie De Craecker, Administrative Assistant, nathalie.decraecker@age-platform.eu



AGE Council Members

President: Marjan Sedmak (Slovenia)

Full Members

Austria	Hilde Hawlicek (Pensionisten Verband)
Belgium	Jean Gengler (ENEO)
Bulgaria	Maria Petkova (Charity Association Hospice Miloserdie)
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Czech Republic	Oldrich Stanek (Zivot 90)
Denmark	Ebbe Johansen (DaneAge/Aeldresagen) Bent Guul (DaneAge/Aeldresagen)
Estonia	Andres Ergma (Estonian Association of pensioners Societies)
Finland	Olé Norrback (Association of Swedish-Speaking Pensioners in Finland) until October 2015 Björn Sundqvist (Association of Swedish-Speaking Pensioners in Finland) since November 2015
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EU Federations	Sonia Guaragna (FIAPA Europe) Leif Hallberg (ESU) Curt Persson (NOPO - Nordic Older People's Organisation) until October 2015 Christine Tallberg (NOPO - Nordic Older People's Organisation) since November 2015 Dirk Jarré (EURAG)
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Substitute Members

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Hungary	Laszlo Patyan (Gerontology Science Coordination Center)
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■ AGE Members - 2015

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Pensionisten Verband

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European Federation of the Community of Sant'Egidio (observer member)

Bulgaria:

Bulgarian Red Cross

Charity Association Donka Paprikova

Third Age Foundation

Association for Social Support

Croatia:

The National Pensioners' Convention of Croatia (NPCC)

Foundation Zajednicki put

Cyprus:

Pancyprian Welfare of the Elderly

Czech Republic:

ZIVOT 90

Alternativa 50+, o.p.s.

Denmark:

DaneAge/Aeldresagen

Estonia:

The Estonian Association of Pensioners' Societies

Finland:

The Association of Swedish-Speaking Pensioners in Finland

The Central Union for the Welfare of the Aged

France:

Les petits frères des Pauvres

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Association des Retraités d'Air France

Association des Retraités ESSO

Confédération Française des Retraités

Génération Mouvement - Fédération nationale

Fédération des anciens du groupe Rhône-Poulenc (FARP)

Fédération Nationale des Associations de Retraités

Union Nationale des Retraités (UNAR-CFTC)

Union des Anciens du Groupe BP

Union Fédérale des Retraités des Banques

Union Française des Retraités
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Gerontology Science Coordination Center

Ireland:

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Senior Help Line
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Italy :

ATDAL Over 40
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Associazione Nazionale Seniores d'Azienda (ANLA)
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Associazione Lavoro Over 40
CNA Pensionati
Federanziani
Federazione Italiana Pensionati Attività Commerciali
UNITRE University of Third Age
Università dei 50 & più
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Età Libera - Associazione di Volontariato
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FAP ACLI
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50 & più
ANCESCAO Coordinamento Provinciale di Latina
Anpcomit - Associazione Nazionale fra Pensionati ed Esodati della Banca Commerciale

Italiana

ENEA aps

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SOLIMAI - societa cooperativa sociale a r.l. (observer member)

Associazione Nazionale Anziani e Pensionati (ANAP) (observer member)

Japan:

Japan Productive Ageing Research Centre

Lithuania:

Lithuanian Pensioners Union, "Bociai"

Malta:

National Association of Pensioners

National Council for The Elderly

Grand Parents Malta

Netherlands:

ANBO

Nederlandse Vereniging van Organisaties van Gepensioneerden (NVOG)

Oudere Vrouwen Netwerk - Nederland

UniekBO

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Spain:

Asociación de Profesores Universitarios Jubilados

Confederación Española De Organizaciones De Mayores (CEOMA)

Catalonian Federation of Elder Associations (FATEC)

Spanish Red Cross

FOCAGG Fed d'Organitzacions Catalanes de Gent Gran, Dones i Família

Federacion Territorial de Asociaciones provinciales de pensionistas y jubilados de alava, Guipuzcoa y Vizcaya

Age Concern España

Design for All Foundation (observer member)

Unión Democrática de Pensionistas (observer member)

Sweden:

SPF Seniorerna

Switzerland :

Age Stiftung (observer member)

Turkey:

Türkiye Emekliler Derneği (Turkey Retired Persons Organisation) – TIED (observer member)

Turkish Geriatrics Society (observer member)

United Kingdom:

Age UK

British Society of Gerontology

Civil Service Pensioners Alliance

National Association of Retired Police Officers (NARPO)

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)

National Pensioners Convention (NPC)

Older People's Commission for Wales

Older Women's Network - Europe

Public Service Pensioner's Council (PSPC)

Homeshare International

The Beth Johnson Foundation

Action for Ageing (observer member)

International Longevity Centre UK (ILC-UK) (observer member)

Age Northern Ireland (observer member)

Institute of Lifelong Learning, University of Leicester (observer member)

The National Federation of Occupational Pensioners (observer member)

National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers (RMT) (observer member)

United States:

AARP (Global Ageing Programme) (observer member)

European Federations:

FIAPA Europe (Fédération Internationale des Associations de Personnes Agées)

European Senior Organisation – ESO

European Senior Citizens Union – ESU

NOPO - Nordic Older People's Organisation

EURAG - Europäisches Zentrum für Arbeitnehmerfragen

European Organisations:

European Association for Directors and Providers of Long-Term Care Services for the Elderly (E.D.E.)

European Association of Homes and Services for the Ageing (EAHSA)

Europäisches Zentrum für Arbeitnehmerfragen (E.Z.A.)

Groupement Européen de Retraités des Caisses d'Épargne, Banques et Institutions Similaires
Seniors of the European Public Service

■ Membership of other European organizations



AGE is member of the [European Anti-poverty Network](#) (EAPN), is an independent network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and groups involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the Member States of the European Union. AGE aims to bring the older people's perspective in EAPN's work and help develop solutions to prevent and address poverty and social exclusion in old age.



[European Public Health Alliance](#) (EPHA) represents around 100 organisations active in the public health sector (patients organisation, health professional, national or European association working on specific public health thematic, etc.). EPHA aims to promote and protect the health interests of all people living in Europe and to strengthen the dialogue between the European institutions, citizens and NGOs in support of healthy public policies.

AGE joined EPHA in 2008 and has since then been closely cooperating on health issues of interest to older people.



The [Platform of European Social NGOs](#) (Social Platform) is the alliance of representative European federations and networks of non-governmental organisations active in the social sector at European level. AGE's role in Social Platform is to voice older citizens' concerns and defend their rights within this EU social network.

■ Financial information

AGE's policy activities in 2015 were financed by membership fees and donations (20%) and by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC) of the European Union (DG Justice) (80%).

In addition to the REC programme, AGE received a grant for the AFE INNOVNET project, a European thematic network funded by CIP ICT PSP Programme. The consortium was composed of 29 partners and was led by AGE with the support of a Steering Group composed of CEMR (Council of European Municipalities and Regions), TNO (Dutch Research Centre), Polibienestar Research Institute – University of Valencia, PAU Education and the Louth County Council (Ireland).

AGE continued its work on European Research Projects throughout 2015, besides being involved in new proposals. AGE was partner of 18 projects dealing with new technologies, health, accessibility, sustainable mobility and senior tourism. Those projects, financed mainly by FP7, CIP PSP, and H2020 are: Doremi, Engaged, EIII, Escape, Families & Societies, Haivisio, Innovage, Irohla, JamToday, Mopact, Pace, Prosperity4all, Smart Care and UCH 2,0, Athlos, Caress, Off To Spa and Sustain. AGE participation in EU research projects is 100% covered by EU funding.

In 2015, AGE also received some donations from members and corporate partners (SCA bronze partnership representing less than 1% of AGE total income) - *See next page for details.*



Sponsors

This publication was published with the support of the 'Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme' of the European Union and donations from the following AGE members and sponsors:



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SCA is a leading global hygiene and forest products company that offers personal care, tissue and forest products in about 100 countries. With more than 50 years of experience in continence care SCA develops solutions and products that help improve dignity and the quality of people's lives. It works closely with carers and their organisations and strives to develop the understanding that well organized and professional continence care ensures substantial benefits to individuals as well as society as a whole.

SCA has joined AFE-INNOVNET to contribute with its knowledge and expertise in elderly care to developing a society for all ages and creating age-friendly environments.

www.sca.com

AGE Platform Europe is a European network of organisations of and for people aged 50+ which aims to voice and promote the interests of the 150 million senior citizens in the European Union and to raise awareness on the issues that concern them most. AGE is involved in a range of policy and information activities to put older people's issues on the EU agenda and to support networking among older people's groups. Our guiding principles hold that a change of attitudes is needed to achieve a European society for all ages and that there is a need to promote solidarity between generations in a way that recognises older people's contributions to society.

By joining AGE Platform Europe, you are doing more than expressing support for AGE's work. AGE members also gain the possibility to:

- Participate in an organisation with a strong and effective voice at EU level;
- Make their voice heard in the network's work and help AGE bring forward the point of view of older people on EU issues that concern them;
- Receive regular information on relevant developments relating to older and retired people;
- Receive up-to-date information in relation to EU funding opportunities, proposals to participate in EU-wide projects and support for the drafting of your own projects;
- The opportunity to share and exchange information with other AGE members.



AGE Platform Europe

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This publication is co-funded by the **Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme** of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of AGE Platform Europe and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.