

The European Commission 2019-2024 and older people

The European Commission is the European 'executive'. It is guardian of the EU treaties, proposes new legislation via its right to initiative, monitors the existing legislation and eventually can launch infringement procedures against breaches, and it implements the EU funds and programmes. In many areas, it has a strong impact on the concerns of older persons.

On 1 December 2019, a new European Commission under the leadership of the President Ms Ursula von der Leyen took office, with dedicated political guidelines.

Demographic change is shown as one of the priorities that her Commission wants to work on.

What are the main priorities of the 2019-2024 Commission relative to older people?

Ms von der Leyen was elected on a programme with the main accents put on the greening of the EU economy, developing EU actions in the area of defense and on the international scene and to take forward the UN Sustainable Development Goals. [In her political guidelines](#) and her address to the European Parliament as a candidate, Ms von der Leyen took the following commitments that are relevant to older persons:

- Make the **UN Sustainable Development Goals the compass for the European Semester** – the European Semester is the process to ensure member states to coordinate social and economic policies, including the fiscal prescriptions of the Stability and Growth Pact. Therefore, it has a strong impact on pension reforms and social protection systems
- Pursue social initiatives: implement the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, introduce a European Unemployment Reinsurance Scheme, a framework for minimum wage and an initiative on working conditions of platform workers. Implement existing initiatives, such as the Directive on Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers
- Introduce a European plan to fight cancer
- Propose new **anti-discrimination legislation** and a **European Gender Strategy**
- Look into legislation regarding the ethical implications of artificial intelligence and propose a Digital Education Action Plan
- Explore **ways for EU actions to address demographic change** especially in rural areas and in the access to long-term care
- Create a **conference on the Future of Europe**

Which Commissioners are important regarding older citizens?

The European Commission president is the head of a college of 27 Commissioners, one coming from each member State. However, the college is collectively responsible towards the EU Parliament and Council and Commissioners are expected not to take instructions from or represent their member State, but the European interest

and the college as a whole. The Commissioners have divided their portfolios just like national ministers, with the addition that there are Vice-Presidents and Executive Vice-Presidents, who each lead a group of other Commissioners on a particular topic. The following Commissioners are most relevant to AGE's work.

[Read also our Special Briefing of December 2019 on the new College of Commissioners.](#)

Name	Function	Member State	Role
 <p>Ms Ursula von der Leyen</p>	President of the European Commission	Germany	As President, responsible for coordinating the Commissioners and set the political guidelines for the five-years term of the Commission
 <p>Ms Dubravka Suica</p>	Vice-President for Democracy and Demography	Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Come up with a report on the impact of demographic change • Propose a green paper on ageing • Organise a conference on the Future of Europe

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 <p>Mr Valdis Dombrovskis</p>	Executive Vice-President for 'an Economy that works for People'	Latvia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate the work on the action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights. • Refocus the European Semester so that it integrates the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals • Strengthen the democratic accountability of our economic governance. • Competence for the Capital Markets Union, which includes the regulation and supervision of private and occupational pension funds
 <p>Ms Margarethe Vesthager</p>	Executive Vice-President 'A Europe Fit for the Digital Age'	Denmark	Coordinating work on a European strategy on data and on a European approach to artificial intelligence, including its human and ethical implications.
 <p>Mr Frans Timmermans</p>	First Executive Vice-President for the 'Green Deal'	Netherlands	Coordinating work on the Just Transition Fund, to support those most affected by the 'green' transition.

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 <p data-bbox="203 560 427 587">Mr Nikolas Schmit</p>	<p data-bbox="510 272 864 336">Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights</p>	<p data-bbox="887 272 1043 300">Luxembourg</p>	<ul data-bbox="1111 272 2042 810" style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights • Monitor and enforce existing EU law in the domain of dignified, transparent and predictable working conditions and to look at ways to improve the labour conditions of platform workers • Contribute to the design of a European Unemployment Benefit Reinsurance Scheme to protect our citizens • Ensure to make the most of the potential of the future European Social Fund+ • Strengthen social protection systems in Europe, notably by using the European Semester to monitor progress • Lead the work on implementing and updating our skills agenda, focusing on identifying and filling skills shortages and supporting reskilling as part of the just transition. Explore the idea of individual learning accounts for people of working age, enabling adults to accumulate training entitlements and use them for quality-assured training.
 <p data-bbox="203 1182 398 1209">Ms Helena Dalli</p>	<p data-bbox="510 823 864 850">Commissioner for Equality</p>	<p data-bbox="887 823 965 850">Malta</p>	<ul data-bbox="1111 823 2042 1294" style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening Europe's commitment to inclusion and equality in all of its senses, irrespective of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. • Leading the fight against discrimination and developing EU anti-discrimination legislation. • Leading on the EU implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. • Developing a European Gender Strategy to address barriers for women, including gender mainstreaming and advocating equality at work with binding pay transparency. • Ensuring the full implementation of the Work-Life Balance Directive. • Exploring the addition of 'violence against women' to the list of EU crimes, while supporting EU accession to the Istanbul Convention.

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 <p data-bbox="203 560 434 587">Ms Mariya Gabriel</p>	<p data-bbox="510 272 775 371">Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture and Youth</p>	<p data-bbox="887 272 987 300">Bulgaria</p>	<p data-bbox="1066 272 1973 336">Ensuring swift agreement on, and full implementation of, the future Horizon Europe research programme.</p> <p data-bbox="1066 344 1917 408">Updating the Digital Education Action Plan and increasing awareness of disinformation and other online threats.</p> <p data-bbox="1066 416 1906 443">Work towards the tripling of the funding for the Erasmus+ programme</p>
 <p data-bbox="203 887 439 914">Mr Paolo Genitloni</p>	<p data-bbox="510 600 775 663">Commissioner for the Economy</p>	<p data-bbox="887 600 943 627">Italy</p>	<ul data-bbox="1111 600 2029 807" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1111 600 2029 663">• Coordinating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the context of the European Semester cycle of economic governance <li data-bbox="1111 671 2007 735">• Leading the work on the design of a European Unemployment Benefit Scheme <li data-bbox="1111 743 1995 807">• Ensure the application of the Stability and Growth Pact, using the full flexibility allowed in the rules.
 <p data-bbox="203 1246 450 1273">Ms Stella Kyriakides</p>	<p data-bbox="510 927 808 954">Commissioner for Health</p>	<p data-bbox="887 927 976 954">Cyprus</p>	<ul data-bbox="1111 927 2029 1390" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1111 927 2029 959">• Ensure Europe has the supply of affordable medicines to meet its needs <li data-bbox="1111 967 2007 1031">• New regulatory framework on medical devices to protect patients and ensure it addresses new and emerging challenges. <li data-bbox="1111 1038 2029 1246">• Make the most of the potential of e-health to provide high-quality healthcare and reduce inequalities. Work on the creation of a European Health Data Space to promote health-data exchange and support research on new preventive strategies, as well as on treatments, medicines, medical devices and outcomes. As part of this, ensure citizens have control over their own personal data. <li data-bbox="1111 1254 2029 1390">• Put forward Europe's Beating Cancer Plan to support Member States to improve cancer prevention and care. This should propose actions to strengthen our approach at every key stage of the disease: prevention, diagnosis, treatment, life as a cancer survivor and palliative care.

How can older people's organisations work with the European Commission?

Any citizen can directly contact the cabinets of the European Commissioners with an issue that is relevant to the Commissioner's work. However, there are more structured and effective ways of making the voice of senior citizens known:

- The **structured consultations**: on each initiative that the European Commission is planning, a public consultation is conducted where citizens, NGOs, business organisations, trade unions, member states or others can voice their views and priorities in this area. Consultations run for a limited period of time and are available on a single website: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations>
- **Taking part in Commission events**: the European Commission regularly organises events for European

and national stakeholders on issues that are relevant to running or upcoming initiatives. Regular events include seminars on the European Semester, the Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth etc. AGE aims to enable member organisations to participate in the most relevant events.

- Stakeholder organisations **can receive funding to work on EU issues**. This can be channelled through the Europe for Citizens programme (soon a strand in the Rights and Values programme) or the European Social Fund+; also through learning networks in adult education via Erasmus+. Also, senior citizens organisations can get involved as societal stakeholders in EU research projects promoted by universities and research centres using EU research funds.
