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Comments on Document COM(2021)50 final *Green Paper on Ageing - Fostering solidarity and responsibility between generations*

We welcome this Green Paper as an important and timely step towards coordinated EU policies on ageing and the quality of life of older as well as younger people. The key issues identified as well as the two main policy concepts of healthy and active ageing and lifelong learning are extremely relevant, as is attention to a life-cycle approach.

In the following we draw attention to some essential dimensions that should be strengthened going forward, and as the Commission proceeds to finalise its proposals. These are: ageism in the context of older people's human rights, climate change, and gender equality and intersectional perspectives.

Ageism and older people's human rights

The Green Paper focuses mainly on the demographic development in the EU and how Member States will deal with related up-coming challenges in terms of work, social protection and welfare services. There is hardly any attention given to older people as rights-holder with legitimate claims to participation and justice. A rights based approach is required in order to adequately underline the rights of each individual, of particular importance to such an extensive and diverse group as older people. Such an approach includes upholding the basic principles of participation, non-discrimination and state accountability. These are key when it comes to older people, because currently they are often overlooked.

The Green Paper refers to the UN 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. A fundamental principle of the Agenda is to not leave anyone behind, clearly emphasising inclusion and non-discrimination. It is essential to recognise that old age is commonly not valued. Older people often have low status and face neglect and discrimination. This - ageism - is a key factor affecting how older people are perceived and how they are treated. This is clearly documented in the recently released *Global Report on Ageism* by WHO, UN DESA and UNFPA. Ageism must be highlighted, acknowledged and addressed through concrete actions. Deeply rooted stereotypes and prejudices are entrenched in institutions, in human relations and internalised by people themselves. EU instruments such as the Green Paper should raise awareness about such prejudices, review existing laws and combat ageism in all sectors. Promotion of interaction between generations as stressed in the Green Paper is another way of combatting ageism. EU should also contribute to the development and promotion of the rights of older people and consider prompt drafting of a comprehensive UN legal instrument on the rights of older people.

Climate change

The global community is currently experiencing two devastating crises: the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate crisis. The Green Paper includes some attention to the significance of the former, but

largely completely ignores the latter. There is a single brief mention in passing of the effects of climate change on older people's health in section 5.1, but climate change is relevant to all the key issues raised in the paper - not least demographics, poverty, labour markets and employment, productivity, social protection, mobility, migration, lifelong learning and the need for new (and green) educational skills for all generations, in addition to health.

Gender equality and intersectional perspectives

As is stated briefly in 5.2 the EU's older population is a predominantly female one. We are pleased to see that gender equality perspectives are highlighted in a few places in the Green Paper, but these need to be greatly strengthened and given attention consistently throughout. Older women and women living with/experiencing/managing multiple marginalised identities are affected greatly in ways that older men are not due to the cumulative effects of gender as well as other forms of discrimination. Gender as well as intersectional dimensions will be highly relevant to proactive policy responses and answers to the altogether 17 questions posed in the shaded boxes in each main section of the paper. The same will be true also for the Action Plan soon to be developed for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights. Unless these dimensions are more adequately addressed, the intentions and purpose of the Green Paper could be undermined. As a result, policy efforts to ensure the quality of life of older people and to promote true solidarity and fairness within and between generations will not be successful.

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