

Health



Minimum  
income

Active Ageing



Age  
discrimination



Mobility



New  
technologies

Pensions



## Who we are

AGE Platform Europe is the new name of AGE-the European Older People's Platform, a European network bringing together about 150 organisations of people aged 50+, directly representing over 28 million older people in the European Union.

AGE aims to voice and promote the interests of the 150 million inhabitants aged 50+ in the European Union and to raise awareness of the issues that concern them most.

### Our membership

Our membership is composed of senior associations and other civil society organisations working with and for older or retired people, to give a strong and credible voice to their views, interests and needs.

### Background

AGE was set up in January 2001 following a process of discussion on how to improve and strengthen co-operation between older people's organisations at EU level. Membership of AGE is open to European, national and regional organisations, and to both organisations of older people and organisations for older people.

Organisations of older people have the majority of votes in AGE's decision-making bodies. Membership is open only to non-governmental non-profit-making organisations. AGE is co-financed by its members and by a grant of the European Union PROGRESS programme.

AGE works at European level to raise awareness of the opportunities and challenges that arise from the ageing of our society, to shape appropriate policy responses and to promote the interests and involvement of older citizens of Europe.

## What is our mission?

AGE aims to voice and defend the interests of older and retired people in the European Union and to raise awareness on the issues that concern them. AGE is involved in a range of policy and information activities to put older people and ageing issues on the EU agenda and to support networking among older people's groups. AGE formulates position papers on relevant EU initiatives, outlining specific policy views and recommendations. These are developed and endorsed by its membership.

AGE believes that there is a need for a greater recognition and understanding at the European level of the impact of European policies on older or retired people. People aged 50+ must have greater opportunities to promote and defend their rights and interests. AGE works for a more effective civil dialogue and seeks to ensure that this dialogue recognises and takes account of the needs and expectations of older and retired people.

Among our guiding principles is the conviction that a change of attitudes is needed to achieve a society for all ages and to ensure that the rights of all age groups including older people are enhanced. Solidarity between generations should also be sought in a way that recognises older people's contributions to society.



## And our vision?

AGE's vision is of a European society of all ages where individuals enjoy equal rights in terms of their living conditions, their economic situation, their participation as citizens and their access to fundamental goods and services. The achievement of age equality will not only benefit older individuals as citizens and give the proper value to their wisdom and experience; it is also in the interest of our ageing society.

### Meeting the challenge of an ageing population

Older people are a large and growing section of the European Union's population. The issue of societal ageing has taken centre stage in European political debate. Ageing is changing our societies in important and fundamental ways and it demands a comprehensive assessment and a reworking of our economic and social policy framework.

### Influencing EU policy

AGE seeks to influence EU policies so that they can adequately reflect the interests of all older people. AGE's work focuses on a wide range of policy areas that impact on older and retired people. These include issues of anti-discrimination, employment of older workers, social protection, social inclusion, health, new technologies and solidarity between generations. AGE co-operates closely with the European Parliament's Intergroup on Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity.



## Guiding principles

AGE is governed by a series of guiding principles to which all its member organisations must adhere. These principles serve as a guide to AGE members and its Secretariat when carrying out activities relating to influencing policy development at EU level.

### Towards a society of all ages

AGE actively campaigns for the inclusion and involvement of all citizens, whatever their age, within society and for greater solidarity between generations and among older people. To respond to the challenge of demographic ageing, major reforms are implemented at EU and national level. AGE cooperates with the European Youth Forum and other NGOs to promote intergenerational fairness and social justice in these debates.

### Older and retired people are a resource

The main underlying principle of AGE's work is the recognition of older people as a resource. Societal ageing is too often seen in terms of challenges posed to the age structure of the workforce, the sustainability of social protection schemes and the organisation and financing of services, including those of health care. This negative image does not do justice to the enormous cultural and professional resource represented by older people. Their vast contribution to society, often in a voluntary capacity, is too often overlooked and needs to be better recognised. A change of attitudes is needed if a true society of all ages is to be created.

### Older people as self-advocates

AGE believes that older or retired people should be able to speak out on their own behalf. To this end, AGE places great importance on their leadership and active involvement in all of its activities.

# AGE Structure

## General Assembly

The General Assembly is the governing body. All Full Member organisations have voting rights. The General Assembly meets annually to adopt the work programme, budget and applications for membership. It elects the President who must come from an organisation "of" older people.

## Council

AGE member organisations elect their national representative(s) at the Council which also includes representatives of European networks. It meets at least twice a year and is responsible for the overall implementation of the work programme and for policy decisions.

## Executive Committee

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

## Accreditation Committee

The role of the Accreditation Committee deals with all issues around membership, including new applications for membership and forwards its recommendations to the Council and the General Assembly.

## Expert groups

Expert groups are set up to inform AGE's work in specific policy areas: age discrimination, employment, social inclusion, pensions, health, new technologies and accessibility. The experts are nominated by the Council members.

## Secretariat

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

## Combating age discrimination

AGE discrimination is experienced in various ways, both directly and indirectly, and can take the form of legal or policy barriers, stereotypes, prejudice or harassment. It can be experienced as an individual or directed at a group. This presents a huge challenge for older people and it is at the root of many of the problems they face. They have to deal with

challenges driven by negative imaging and stereotyping, and assumptions about their economic potential, productivity, skills, and income needs. Such negative perceptions fail to acknowledge the enormous cultural, social and professional resource represented by older people and are unacceptable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Age discrimination takes place in all spheres of life and policy developments in diverse areas need to be better coordinated to develop an accurate understanding of what demographic change means in order to support the right policy responses promoting inter-generational fairness and solidarity. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union provides a legal framework for ensuring the whole range of civil, political, economic and social rights of European citizens of all ages.

## Recommendations

- > Recognise that age discrimination in all EU Member States is a reality and that combating it must be a political priority;
- > Adopt and implement a stronger legal basis for non-discrimination accompanied by non-legislative measures to promote greater equality. Address the necessary qualitative changes to the economic, social, cultural and political structures of society in order to tackle age discrimination;
- > Tackle multiple-discrimination;
- > Mainstream age equality into general policy implementation at all political levels.



## Promoting the employment of older workers

EU labour markets are increasingly faced with the challenges of globalisation, rapid technological progress and population ageing. The social and economic consequences of the crisis add to these challenges and call for an adaptation of existing working arrangements to facilitate labour market participation among older workers.

The promotion of active ageing needs to remain high on the EU's agenda and the Europe 2020 Strategy needs to address employment challenges faced by older workers, pensions reforms and gender equality,

There is a need for new structures and approaches in society to adapt to the increasing number of older workers and to enable them to remain active on the labour market. Negative cultural attitudes and age discrimination towards older workers need to be addressed. The implementation of legislation is important but is not enough in itself; negative cultural attitudes towards older workers need to be addressed, as does the prevailing age discrimination in the labour market and workplace.

### Recommendations

- > Adopt appropriate policy responses to safeguard and promote employment among older workers as the EU comes out of the economic crisis;
- > Create incentives to encourage older workers to remain longer in employment and promote more positive approaches to an ageing workforce among employers;
- > Facilitate better working conditions and promote skills development through lifelong learning;
- > Accommodate the challenges faced by older women to enable them to reconcile work with family care responsibilities.

## Ensuring an adequate income in old age

Increased life expectancy and the improved health of older people is one of the proudest achievements of recent social and economic development in Europe. In the aftermath of the crisis, while the debate about Europe's ageing societies is focusing almost exclusively on the increasing pensions expenditure and old-age dependency ratios, it is not

touching on important discussions about the necessary qualitative changes to the economic, social and political structures.

Older people are often represented as a burden to society and their significant contributions to national social security systems and their role in helping younger generations with their income and time in old age are often unrecognised. From such an intergenerational perspective, adequate pensions are not only important to older people but to society as a whole.

### Recommendations

- > A balanced and diversified pension architecture with a particular emphasis on adequate and reliable statutory schemes through the so-called first pillar;
- > Strengthened security for individual entitlements in funded pension schemes;
- > Measures to facilitate the retention of older workers in their jobs and access to quality employment for those seeking work;
- > Specific attention to be paid to address the existing gender inequalities in old-age income and avoid creating new sources of inequalities for future cohorts;
- > Support to individuals with shorter or atypical employment careers to help them build sufficient pension rights;
- > Promote education and provide regular and accessible information about the building-up of pension rights.

## Social inclusion

A combination of factors such as low income, poor health, age and/or gender-based discrimination, reduced physical or mental capacity, unemployment, isolation, abuse, and limited access to services can all play a part in increasing the risk of poverty and social exclusion as people age.

Given that people aged 65 and over are the fastest growing part of Europe's population, all Member States together with the European Union, should address those specific threats faced by older people through a structured and focused anti-poverty strategy. AGE seeks to raise awareness of the situation and social realities of older people, notably within the EU social inclusion process. The Open Method of Coordination remains the key policy framework to develop a comprehensive social inclusion policy and to involve all relevant stakeholders including people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

## Recommendations

- > Combat the multiple dimensions of poverty and social exclusion among older people;
- > Guarantee an adequate minimum income in old age to fight poverty and prevent social exclusion;
- > Develop minimum income standards for pensioners guaranteeing decent life and personal dignity;
- > Target older people in National Action Plans on social inclusion and involve those living in poverty in the policy-making process;
- > Agree national targets for poverty reduction by gender and age groups;
- > Enforce gender equality in employment to ensure adequate retirement income for women;
- > Reach out, inform and help the most vulnerable older people who are unable to claim their pension rights;
- > Ensure protection against in-work poverty among older workers; and
- > Promote individual well-being and quality of life at all ages through universal access to essential services.

# Health

While health policy remains a national competence, health related issues are increasingly addressed at the European level. In March 2005, the Spring Summit agreed to extend the Open Method of Coordination to the field of health and long-term care, making the health of citizens, including older people, a key focus of concern at both EU and national levels.

AGE calls for a holistic and coordinated approach to health policy at all levels, along with adequate national policies, to ensure the healthy ageing of older people.

## Recommendations

- > Promote healthy ageing lifestyles, independent living and the social participation of older people;
- > Mainstream demographic ageing into the new EU health strategy and into all relevant EU policies;
- > Provide universal and equitable access to health advice, preventative services, quality health treatment and long-term care; and ensure that the elderly receive the support they need to live a dignified life at home or in residential care;
- > Concrete action is needed at all levels to prevent all forms of elder abuse, whether of a physical, psychological or financial nature;
- > Ensure the proper testing and design of medicinal products for older people; and promote the rational and equitable use of health resources to ensure the long term sustainability and universal access of health systems;
- > Provide fully qualified and trained gerontologists and geriatricians to meet the health needs of our ageing population.

## Universal Accessibility and Independent Living

The quality of indoor and outdoor environment affects everybody's quality of life and in particular older people: rapid and continuous improvements in new technologies, transport services and the evolution of the build environment have a direct impact on their health and quality of life. Accessible transport systems and build environment, as well as user friendly

technologies can assist older people in carrying out daily activities, monitor their health, create social networks, facilitate their participation in the labour market or in volunteer activities and better guarantee their safety.

AGE closely monitors the latest developments in these areas and voices the interests of older users, making sure that these advances meet the needs of older people in the current debate at EU level.

### Recommendations

- Ensure that the provision of goods, technological applications and services are user friendly, accessible, affordable and appropriate for all;
- Develop a legal framework requiring all public and private entities to apply common accessibility criteria and promote a "Design for All" approach to include the needs of all people in society;
- Take into account the needs of older consumers when developing services, products, devices or training programmes which are directly aimed at them;
- Encourage older people to take advantage of the Information Society in all fields;
- Support multidisciplinary research and monitor the social and economic implications of accessible goods and services for older people;
- Create network structures for cooperation between industry and older people's organisations.

## Solidarity between generations

Demographic ageing is strongly affecting the relationships among generations and the way European societies function. Rather than focusing on the negative challenges of ageing, such as its impact on the increased pension and health care expenditure or on the shrinking labour force, demographic reality should be looked at as an opportunity, which can bring solutions to many current

economic and social challenges, but requires a new assessment and reworking of several economic and social policies within society.

AGE cooperates with other NGOs to bring more intergenerational fairness and social justice to this debate at EU level and encourage initiatives at national and local level.

Within a coalition of NGOs, AGE actively campaigns to promote the EU Day on Intergenerational Solidarity on 29 April and to support a EU Year on Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity in 2012.

## Recommendations

- > Mainstream an intergenerational solidarity approach within all EU policies;
- > develop local, national and EU policies, regulation and funding programmes which empower EU citizens of all ages to play an active part in society;
- > develop a European Active Ageing Strategy to address all aspects linked to demographic ageing and activation of the 50+;
- > Launch a EU Year of Active ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity in 2012 and set up ambitious yet realistic targets with regard to active ageing and solidarity between generations;
- > promote and support all local initiatives which favour contacts, exchange or mutual support between generations.

## Membership of other European Networks

AGE is a member of the Platform of European Social NGOs (Social Platform), the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) and the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) where it brings the perspective of older people.

More information on these networks can be found on their websites:

Social Platform: <http://www.socialplatform.org>

EAPN: <http://www.eapn.org>

EPHA: <http://www.ephaproject.org>

The logo for the Social Platform, featuring the words "socialplatform" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. "social" is in a lighter blue and "platform" is in a darker blue.

**More  
information**



More information on AGE Platform Europe, and on its objectives and EU lobbying activities can be found on the AGE website at:

[www.age-platform.eu](http://www.age-platform.eu)

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