

AGE Platform Europe Final Declaration

AGE General Assembly, 8 June 2017

At this historical moment for the European Union, as we celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Rome Treaties but also face new challenges, AGE Platform Europe General Assembly calls on European Institutions, EU Member States, local and regional authorities to rebuild a collective project aimed at giving the EU a true identity thanks to its capacity for integration, based on the core values of the European Union: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

Respect and enjoyment of one's human rights by all individuals is a fundamental feature of our democratic societies. The right to be respected and treated with dignity, to participate in society may seem obvious to many, but can be a real challenge for other people especially if they are older. In the past decade, the global and EU contexts have radically changed the political and social landscapes of Europe.

The persistent financial, economic and social crisis combined with demographic "pressure", the cumulative impact of austerity policies, the migration and refugee crisis, the growing fear of terrorist attacks, the populism which has advanced in many countries, the shock of the EU referendum in the UK, all lead to a growing feeling that the EU needs to reconsider its objectives, organisation and processes.

Against these developments the AGE network welcomes the proposed European Pillar of Social Rights as a key instrument that can help the EU reconnect with its citizens and create a forward-looking society where everyone has a role to play, is valued and supported to lead an active and autonomous life regardless of age, gender, race or ethnic origin, religion, disability, or sexual orientation. Maintaining and promoting our basic European values of dignity, solidarity and equality should continue guiding all EU external and internal actions.

In this respect, an international convention on the rights of older persons would ultimately be an important acknowledgement that older citizens are of equal value to society. It will draw public attention to the specific structural and cultural barriers that prevent older women and men from enjoying their rights. It will prescribe the changes that are necessary for Member States to fulfil their obligations under the existing universal human rights instruments and encourage the establishment of mechanisms that older people can use to claim their rights.

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



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AGE Platform Europe's members urge Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission to proclaim the rights proposed by the EU Social Pillar during the next Social Summit on 17 November 2017

The European Pillar of Social Rights should be seized as the unique chance to propose an ambitious social agenda for the EU. The proposed set of rights addresses the Rome Declaration signed by the leaders of 27 EU Member States on 25 March 2017 who stressed the importance of a strong social Europe. The realisation of the principles and rights defined in the European Pillar of Social Rights is now a joint responsibility of national governments, EU institutions, social partners, civil society and other stakeholders. AGE Platform Europe members ask that the necessary institutional and political conditions are fulfilled so that the Pillar is effectively implemented in all EU countries. Older persons and their organisations are keen to take an active part in the Pillar's implementation. Any future socio-economic reform should boost Europe's growth while respecting older people's right to dignity and independence in Article 25 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. We call in particular on policy makers to use the European Pillar of Social Rights to translate into practice the right to affordable and quality health and long-term care, as well as the right to adequate pensions and minimum old-age income for current and future generations. A just redistribution of wealth is necessary to ensure that women and men of all ages live and age in dignity.

Moreover, in view of enforcing the rights of older persons, AGE calls on the EU and its Member States to move forward in the following areas:

➤ Combat proactively persistent age discrimination in all areas of older people's lives

Due to the pervasiveness of ageism and the context of demographic ageing, age discrimination should receive equal attention at EU and national level as other grounds of discrimination, and deserves to become an identified work priority in the work programme of European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice; as much as all other grounds of discrimination listed in the non-discrimination articles of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Furthermore, the EU and member states need to step up their efforts to adopt the proposed EU horizontal equal treatment directive, which is necessary to ensure that everyone, including older people, can participate equally in society. The implementation of existing and future equality law should avoid broad exemptions to age discrimination that risk invalidating the principle of age equality.

➤ Fight abuse, violence and neglect of older persons

The EU should address these severe violations of older people's human rights by facilitating the adoption by member states of comparable methodologies to measure the prevalence of the different forms of elder abuse. This should be part of a wider EU action plan to raise

awareness of elder abuse in public debates and encourage member states to develop specific strategies. The implementation of the 2012 EU Directive on Victims' Rights should contribute to providing better support and protection to victims of elder abuse, which can be achieved by training care professionals, victim support services, police and legal professionals, among others, in order to sensitize all the actors to the specific nature of elder abuse and the special needs of older victims.

➤ **Address the challenge of migration and refugees from the perspective of human rights but also as societal and economic opportunity**

A coherent and common EU response is indispensable in order to turn the challenge of today's migration and refugee crisis into an opportunity. The European Union should offer safe ways to legally enter its territory and ensure that migrants and refugees of all age receive the necessary support and are empowered to become fully fledged members of their host societies. The response to migration and the refugee crisis is a humanitarian act, expression of solidarity, as well as a societal and economic opportunity that will be beneficial for the peace and prosperity of all.

➤ **Support equal opportunities for older people at grass-roots level through the promotion of age-friendly environments across the EU**

To help combat ageism, it is essential to build age-friendly environments (AFE). They will first empower older workers to remain at work for longer through acquiring new skills, transferring knowledge, reducing the digital divide between and within generations, and will eventually create an inclusive labour market for older workers. Moreover, AFE will support older people to age in better physical and mental health; promote their social inclusion and active participation; and help them maintain their right to independent living and a good quality of life in their old age. AFE are a basic precondition for the empowerment of older people to enjoy their rights on an equal basis with other age groups. Moreover, the creation of AFE will lower the pressure on traditional care and assistance and boost the economy through demand for innovative solutions.

➤ **Pursue efforts and contribute to the UN reflection on the rights of older people**

Building on the 2016 European Parliament resolution which called on the EU and Member States to actively engage in the debate on older people's rights in the framework of the United Nations Open Ended Working Group (OEWG), we hope that the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) will continue the discussion around a new binding international instrument on the rights of older persons, i.e. to enable them fully enjoy their rights.

➤ **Actively promote a positive image of ageing and recognise the contributions of older people**

The contributions of older people to society are often devalued and old age is often seen as synonymous to decline, burden and uselessness. The EU and Member States should raise awareness of older people's diversity in terms of needs, concerns and expectations; recognise their numerous contributions, notably as workers, informal caregivers, volunteers, grandparents, consumers and political actors; and identify the multiple discriminations they face in enjoying their rights. The diversity of all generations must be respected, while treating the different age groups equitably in the name of equality and dignity.

As members of the older generation, we have a duty to defend our shared values and the European dream that we and our parents have been building together over the past decades. Our aim is that of a European Union of peace and solidarity, growth and prosperity for all, respectful of the diversity among all population and age groups. Together we want to pursue our endeavours in favour of a society inclusive of all and will continue to join forces to ensure a better and safer future for all generations in Europe and in other parts of the world.
