

MANIFESTO

for the European
Parliament
elections 2014

AGE Platform Europe is a European network of around 165 organisations of and for people aged 50+ which aims to voice and promote the interests of the 150 million senior citizens in the EU and to raise awareness on the issues that concern them most. AGE Platform UK is a forum for the national members of the network, and it commends this Manifesto - built from the pan-European template – to Parliamentary candidates fighting for UK seats.

Our shared vision is of a society for all ages, free from age discrimination and stereotypes, and based on solidarity and cooperation between generations. People of all ages must be empowered to play an active part in the community and enjoy equal rights and opportunities throughout life, regardless of age, sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, social or economic status, sexual orientation, physical or mental condition, or need for care.

Achieving a society for all ages will require decision-makers and all relevant stakeholders to take shared responsibility for designing new ways of organising our society. It will ensure a fairer and more sustainable future for all generations and tackle the ongoing economic and social crisis. Civil society's involvement in policy-making at all levels of decision-taking is a central call.

We urge candidate MEPs to look to creating an **Age-Friendly European Union** and support EU policies and initiatives which will:

1. Promote human rights, equal opportunities, and a positive approach to ageing
2. Build physical and mental health services fit for an ageing society
3. Provide universal access to essential goods and services
4. Ensure living standards and living places which work for older people
5. Create age-friendly working opportunities and environments
6. Engage older people in policy-making and decision-taking which affects them
7. Stand up for the right to live a full life with dignity
8. Address the international dimensions of ageing

AGE Platform Europe calls for the re-establishment of the Intergroup on Ageing and Solidarity between Generations to keep these issues high on the agenda.

1

Promote human rights, equal opportunities, and a positive approach to ageing

- Many people experience infringements of their rights in later life. These can include abuse and degrading treatment, unwarranted deprivation of liberty and autonomy, lack of protection for family and private life, and routine discrimination. We want all older people to live dignified and secure lives as equal members of society: legislation which protects human rights would be a powerful tool, as would unblocking the draft Directive on Equal Treatment outside of employment.
- The European Parliament needs to be involved with the drafting of the EU position in the UN open-ended working group on ageing to ensure there is a mandate from EU citizens. The Parliament should encourage the development of international legislation such as a convention on the human rights of older people to make existing agreements work better for older people, raise awareness of their rights and help fill gaps in legislation. The Parliament should also ensure that existing human rights commitments that could benefit older people, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, are properly monitored and implemented.
- Attitudes to ageing can have a direct impact on people's treatment and experience as they grow older. Negative stereotypes combined with an ageing population can lead public opinion to view older people as a burden and a drain on resources rather than recognise and enable the contribution many people in later life already make to society. The House of Lords Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change concluded in its report ['Ready for Ageing?'](#) that the UK is "woefully underprepared" for an ageing society, and that debate in the UK focuses on the 'burden' arguments at the expense of the positive potential. We call for a positive and joined up approach from the UK government and Parliamentarians, working in partnership with cross sector agencies, across the United Kingdom and European Union. The EU can build on previous work to improve gender inequality in access to financial and insurance products.
- An approach based on the positive potential older people can offer could also have beneficial economic implications, enabling people to live healthier and independent lives for longer, as active citizens and contributors to society. To do so, older people need to have the resources and resilience to adopt a positive approach to ageing. MEPs can play an important role in the UK and the EU to build this approach to an ageing society, which recognises the contribution older people make, and supports projects and resources to strengthen resilience and promote solutions.
- The headline targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy - as it considers employment, pensions and equality - could better reflect the needs of an ageing society, for example considering employment beyond traditional retirement age, the employment of older women, active ageing and opportunities for skill sharing across the generations.

2

Build physical and mental health services fit for an ageing society

- We call for a higher priority on health promotion and disease prevention as health services are re-shaped for an ageing population. We also need a much sharper focus on dementia. The European Innovation Partnership is a helpful driver of the EU wide goal to increase healthy life expectancy by two years by 2020. The Partnership should be steering more money towards biomedical research, greater investment in social gerontology and more innovative treatment and support models tested across Europe.

- Evidence suggests that promoting an active lifestyle remains the single most effective way society can encourage physical and mental wellbeing and reduce loneliness and isolation. An active lifestyle involves keeping physically fit and mentally active, eating a healthy diet, avoiding substance misuse, pursuing hobbies and having social connections.
- A holistic and integrated approach to health and care policy and practice will address a range of other related policies, including social, economic, housing, planning and transport policy. Flexible working and adaptive workplaces will become increasingly important as an ageing workforce moves higher up the EU's social agenda.

3

Provide universal access to essential goods and services

- By 2047 there will be more people over 60 than under 15 worldwide. But many goods and services offered by public or commercial providers have not yet adapted for an ageing population, where people are often living many more healthy years after traditional retirement age than ever before.
- In Great Britain, the Equality Act (2010) offers protection against ageism and other forms of discrimination and from 2012 it is now unlawful, in most cases, to discriminate on the basis of age in the provision of services, carrying out public functions and activities of clubs and associations. But there are still important exemptions which exclude older people from financial services such as travel insurance and mortgages and protections do not extend to Northern Ireland. We call for progress on the draft EU Directive to combat discrimination beyond employment (2000/78/EC), through which the European Parliament could help to offer protection against unjustified discrimination in financial services and remove arbitrary age restrictions which are often based on stereotypes of younger or older people.
- According to the Eurostat statistical portrait on the EU 2012, during the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity Between the Generations, 61% of people aged 55-64 had access to an internet connection, yet that was true for only 35% of those aged 65-74 and 18% in the 75+ age group.
- In an increasingly digitised world, Age Platform UK wants to ensure that older people are not excluded or disadvantaged and that an ageing society can also benefit from technological advances – including telehealth and telecare – while also maintaining social connectedness and avoiding loneliness. Go ON UK, a charity working to improve digital skills across the UK, reports around 16 million people in the UK aged over 15 do not have basic online skills, yet 90% of all jobs are set to require ICT literacy by 2015. In the context of an ageing society, there is a growing economic imperative to bridge this digital divide and encourage lifelong learning. Building on the EU's emphasis on increasing accessibility, MEPs have a key role to play in promoting digital inclusion.

4

Ensure living standards and living places which work for older people

- The physical and social environments in which we live are key determinants of healthy and independent living in later life. Age friendly environments are those which both meet the needs of individual older people and support independence and quality of living through active ageing, civic participation, contact with people of all ages and positive management of transitions throughout the life course. An accessible transport and built environment, along with assistive technologies, can enable older people to carry out daily activities, remain active citizens and live independently for longer. Housing is another area where investment in lifetime homes could provide health and care dividends for the growing

numbers of older and disabled people who will otherwise require expensive adaptations to inaccessible properties, or move into costly residential care before this is really needed.

- The European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities is a useful tool with which to adapt urban spaces to the needs of an ageing population. The next European Parliament must monitor this programme closely. It would also be advantageous to connect with the World Health Organization's (WHO) Age Friendly Environments Programme and Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities, with established links to good practice in this area.
- Older people can play a hugely important role in their local communities, as contributors and consumers, so as long as certain basic needs are met. These might be as simple as even paving, public toilets, street lighting, transport and a place to sit down. The design of our environment and housing also reflects and impacts on attitudes to ageing and whether or not people of different ages are able to interact positively. Progressing these should be part of the Partnership on Smart Cities.
- People still need adequate incomes to live successfully and independently in society, and the European White Paper on Pensions provides a good framework. Though the EU has no competence for pensions legislation, the observations about adequacy and sustainability are helpful, and the practical steps towards greater clarity and transparency are worth promoting. Age Platform UK seeks a positive approach to an ageing society, which promotes an individual right to an adequate pension for all. The European Parliament should be ensuring an approach which protects both older people today and for the future - an intergenerational approach which recognises the mutual interests of older people and society as a whole.
- Working longer is a key to pension adequacy, and more of us will live many more years, even decades, beyond traditional retirement age. The way we study, work, care and retire is now more complex than traditional models. It is therefore increasingly important to support people's opportunities to learn, retrain and develop new skills as they age to maintain their employment options. Lifelong learning also helps older people stay in good physical and psychological health, contributes to active ageing, and helps to prolong or develop social networks to avoid loneliness and isolation. The European Parliament should shine a spotlight on these issues.
- There is huge potential for skill sharing between the generations, passing on skills and knowledge which may have been lost or overtaken by digital developments, or sharing latest tips about new technologies and social media. Learning empowers older people to be active citizens and contributors as well as maintain their own wellbeing, self-esteem and creativity.

5

Create age-friendly working opportunities and environments

- In the current economic climate and the desire to increase youth employment, there can be a tendency to consider older workers as preventing younger people from entering the labour force and progressing their careers. There is actually no evidence to support this view. Furthermore, an ageing population may require extended working lives, perhaps working flexibly or retraining or skill sharing with younger workers, and beyond that, the European Parliament should consider access to skills and workplace training as an important issue for older people.

- Second careers and gradual transitions from employment to retirement are likely to help both active ageing and the economy. We need to support quality and durable jobs for older people, and call for action to facilitate transitions between jobs, and from work to retirement. Currently, there is high unemployment faced by older jobseekers, and more is needed to promote flexible, accessible and age friendly workplaces.
- The EU Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health at Work has the potential to improve working conditions for employees of all ages. There is also room for an EU Directive on carers' leave for employees with caring responsibilities – a significant concern for older workers. We call on MEPs to challenge mandatory retirement ages and promote good practice across Europe to improve flexible working opportunities so that workplaces can benefit from the wisdom and experience older people can offer.

6 Engage older people in policy-making and decision-taking which affects them

- In the current financial context, with many cross sector agencies struggling with capacity and resources, there is a particular need for concerted efforts to engage older people and to ensure their voice is heard in decisions affecting their lives. As we reform public services and re-order priorities to reflect an ageing society, we must ensure that older people are involved as co-designers and co-producers. MEPs can support the involvement of older people in the EU Semester process which requires that civil society organisations should be consulted on the National Reform Programmes, which the UK Government and all Member States publish each year. They can also support AGE Platform's call for the re-establishment of the Intergroup on Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.
- EU funded research into issues around ageing should require user involvement at an early stage. Older people should be enabled to participate in meaningful consultation and co-design of EU funded projects. Parliamentarians should ensure that the EU's own consultative processes involve older people when issues affecting them are under discussion, as it does with producer interests and to a lesser extent with consumer organisations. Indeed this could be a statutory duty. EU Treaty articles make reference to civil dialogue - but this principle has far from widespread implementation (especially in the UK).

7 Stand up for the right to live a full life with dignity

- A core issue for the EU has long been its role in the protection and promotion of human rights. With health and other public services increasingly under strain and needing to change and adapt, an important dimension for older people facing possible frailty and vulnerability in later life is that they should receive proper help and support in a dignified and respectful way. We call upon the next European Parliament to launch an initiative which will guarantee the right to live a full life in dignity for all.
- The European Commission should work to develop an EU-wide strategy which will expose and address the issue of elder abuse.

Address the international dimensions of ageing

- The EU is the world's largest aid donor: more than 100 developing countries receive EU development assistance accounting for more than half of the world's total development aid. Projections show that there will be two billion older people globally by 2050. These older people will represent 22 per cent of the world's population and will mostly live in developing countries.
- World leaders are in the process of deciding what will replace the Millennium Development Goals as the present set expire in 2015. These Goals have driven some useful progress in International Development but have failed to make any specific reference to older people. Through the EU, Parliamentarians can press for the post-2015 framework to shape government policy and funding and to influence political agendas for years to come, so it is important that it unequivocally addresses older people's rights, needs and aspirations.
- Both the European Commission and the UK Government have committed to helping to create a post-2015 framework, which addresses poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. However, a long term plan needs a long term vision and we still face widespread problems of age discrimination, lifetime inequalities of income, education, employment, health and disability and gender. The next European Parliament needs to put its weight behind a post-2015 framework that delivers for people of all ages.

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