



# Age-friendly EU

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## 2014 Manifesto Towards and Age-friendly European Parliament

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In 2014, AGE Platform Europe, the largest network of older people's organisations in the EU, has established a [manifesto](#), [campaigning tools for older people](#) and a [blog](#) to bring forward the concerns of older people. Different progresses have been made, but some very important dossiers have been stalled however.

### **1. Promote equal opportunities and the realisation of human rights for all**

In this domain, the proposal on a horizontal non-discrimination directive, which is in the legislative pipeline since 2008, is extremely important to older people. Currently, discrimination on the basis of age is only prohibited in the area of employment, but in all other walks of life, the EU principle of non-discrimination (enshrined in the treaties and in the EU Charter of Fundamental

Rights), is still not backed by legislation.

In this domain, the proposal on a **horizontal non-discrimination directive**, which is in the legislative pipeline since 2008, is extremely important to older people. Currently, discrimination on the basis of age is only prohibited in the area of employment, but in all other walks of life, the EU principle of non-discrimination (enshrined in the treaties and in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights), is still not backed by legislation. The horizontal anti-discrimination directive has been proposed by the Barroso Commission and has passed Parliament already during the last legislature; but since, this file is stalled and pending the discussions in the European Council. This blockade is due to the inability of member states to agree, not the fault of the Parliament. The Parliament has called for the adoption of this directive in a great number of non-binding resolutions, but the pressure on national governments to bring this topic into the public debate and adopt it could have been greater.

The Members of Parliament, and particularly those grouped in the Intergroup subgroup on active ageing and solidarity between generations, have been instrumental however to stimulate the **United Nations debate on the international human rights protection of older persons**. The Parliament has **regularly included calls on the Commission and member states to actively engage in the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing**, which is exploring the human rights framework for older persons. Recently, the discussion moved from debating the necessity of a binding legal instrument towards the different areas which an instrument should cover, which is a huge progress in this debate.

The **intersectionality of age discrimination** with other grounds of discrimination, such as gender, disability, sexual orientation, poverty, rural isolation or migration background have only partially been present in the European Parliament's work. Some references to older disabled people have been included in resolutions on disability, but this has only happened timidly. Much **more frequent were references to older women** in resolutions on poverty from a gender perspective and other resolutions focussing on poverty.

An important milestone for older people was the **Kukan report on the**

[European Year 2012 on Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations](#): many older people's concerns have been taken up in this report that laid down a possible follow-up agenda for the Commission and member states.

## **2. Guarantee the adequacy, fairness and sustainability of Europe's social protection and social inclusion systems**

Despite some progress concerning older persons in social protection and social inclusion, and calls from European Parliament to address the issue, little has been done to achieve the Europe 2020 poverty target.

Some progress has been made during the legislature on the measuring and assessment of the issues concerning older persons in social protection and social inclusion. The most important development in the social field is the proposal by the European Commission of a **European Pillar of Social Rights** that would encompass rights to life-long learning, to work-life balance, to minimum income and old-age income that allows for a life in dignity, to long-term care and access to health, to non-discrimination in employment and to active employment support. This comprehensive package was welcomed by the European Parliament with the important [Rodrigues report on the proposed pillar of social rights](#). The adapted proposal of the Commission proposed one year after the first draft proposal is to be adopted by the European Council and European Parliament in the rest of the legislature.

Regular [resolutions on the European Semester](#) (or [here](#)) have called on the Commission to create at least guidelines, at best table a directive on minimum income schemes that keep people out of poverty. **The gender pension gap of 40%** has been a prominent issue in [different resolutions on the situation of women or work-life balance](#), and the Le Grip resolution focusses specifically on the gender pension gap. Frequent calls have also been made to **respect the Europe 2020 poverty target** on reducing poverty by 20 million according to the 2008 levels.

This had some influence on the actions of the Commission. The regular **Pension Adequacy Reports** now take into account pensions of people with non-standard careers, longer career breaks, early retirement and periods of

non-standard careers, longer career breaks, early retirement and periods of unemployment. This makes the problems more visible; however action is required from the member States. Despite the calls from the European Parliament, little has been achieved on the Europe 2020 poverty target, and poverty levels are just back to the pre-crisis levels, however with an important handicap: while material deprivation is decreasing and more people are in employment, the at-risk of poverty rate as a relative, monetary indicator is still increasing.

### **3. Ensure universal access to goods and services, in particular to the built environment, ICT, mobility and public services**

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The **European Accessibility Act**, which should oblige product and service providers to make their offers accessible to persons with disabilities, has finally been proposed by the European Commission, albeit with insufficient ambition. At the current state Parliament has even reduced these ambitions. Still, many important things have been kept in the directive: products and services such as payment terminals, e-book readers, websites and mobile device-based services are now covered by this directive. The built environment in which covered services are provided has to be accessible as well. Also, the transport infrastructure, such as underground and rail transport stations are covered, as well as new and regenerated buildings. The directive however excludes microenterprises from the scope of application and they have lighter obligations under the directive. The proposal is not adopted yet, it still has to pass the Council, therefore there is still scope for the Parliament to push for an adoption of its version of the Act.

On **age-friendly environments**, many of the EU initiatives are voluntary and do not fall into the scope of the Parliament's work; however it has

regularly supported these efforts. Efforts include the creation of a **European Covenant on Demographic Change**, which gathers cities and regions, as well as industry and research institutes around the issue of age-friendly environments. Also, the '**Silver Economy Awards**' aim to promote innovative and ICT-based solutions for active and healthy ageing. A **European project** is looking at standardisation processes and how to support active and healthy ageing by standards.

On **financial services**, it should be noted that the **Directive on the portability of supplementary pension rights** has been adopted, which allows those who have saved for their retirement together with their employer to draw on these funds even when they move in another EU country during retirement. The **directive on Institutions for Occupational Retirement Provision** has also been adopted, providing for more transparency on people's pension rights under occupational ('second-pillar') pensions and stronger standards for governance and oversight of these funds. There would have been scope for even more transparency, for example on costs and fees related to pension funds, but this has not been retained unfortunately.

The Commission has launched the '**Capital Markets Union Action Plan**', which promotes different aims to develop European markets for financial services. An important proposal in this regards is a proposal for a framework to **Pan-European Pension Products**, but this proposal is still under discussion. Many barriers of older people, such as age discrimination still persist in financial services such as motor insurances (and therefore car rental) or access to credit. The latter can have important consequences for older persons: they are unable to renovate their homes to save energy and are more exposed to high energy costs, as many homes have often been built or renovated long ago. The problem of energy poverty also concerns many older persons. The Commission's '**Action Plan on Retail Financial Services**' includes these concerns, but concrete initiatives are still forthcoming and the EP's position is not clear on these issues for the moment.

#### **4. Support the right to grow and age in good mental and physical health**

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In the European Semester, the Parliament has often expressed its call for health systems providing for universal access, strengthening a preventive approach. However, a systematic strategy is still lacking on this point.

In the past legislature, the following activities took place in the Parliament or with MEPs concerning health issues relevant to older people:

- The Commission has introduced an EU logo to **identify legal online pharmacies**
- The MEPs called **for addressing inequalities in access to quality healthcare and innovative medicines**
- MEPs organised **a conference on the importance of mental health for active and healthy ageing**
- MEPs organised an event to emphasise **the role of sports in the promotion of active ageing**
- A debate was organised on **health literacy**

## **5. Create age-friendly labour markets and economy**

As the recovery from the crisis has set on only late, the labour market was very present in the work of this Parliament. Slowly, the consciousness that it is more difficult for older workers, especially older jobseekers, to keep in the labour market with higher retirement ages has grown. The Parliament has called on the Commission and member states several times to develop

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In numerous occasions, the Parliament has **asked for stronger life-long learning systems** (or [here](#)) to be able to allow people to keep up with social and technological developments at the workplace. The Council recommendation on 'Upskilling Pathways', part of the New Skills Agenda, will provide opportunities for adult learners to complete their education and training later in life. In its **opinion on the Erasmus+ programme**, the Parliament asked for the programme to be available 'for all ages'.

**Work-life balance** is also a crucial issue for older workers, as 80% of long-term care needs are covered by informal carers, often family members. Especially older workers can be faced with the need for care of their older parents, and need to take time off, sometimes dropping out of the labour market. The Parliament has **adopted a strong report on work-life balance**, demanding a directive on carers' leave that would allow carers to continue working. The demand had an effect, as the Commission has proposed an initiative on work-life balance in 2017 with a provision on five days of carers' leave per year and per worker.

To address **age discrimination in employment**, the Parliament has called for addressing this issue more widely, even **rejecting employment guidelines** proposed by the Commission because they were deemed not ambitious enough. **Written questions** have been addressed to the Commission on how it is implementing the employment equality directive, prohibiting age

discrimination in employment. Members of Parliament also **discussed the Social Partners' Framework Agreement on Active Ageing and an Intergenerational Approach**, emphasising the importance of addressing active ageing in the workplace holistically.

The Parliament has **supported more ambition in occupational health and safety policies**, notably in taking a more preventative approach to health and safety. This is crucial for workers to be able to work until retirement age and has endorsed the campaign of the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work on healthy workplaces for all ages.

## **6. Protect the right to live and die in dignity**

The European Union has made great progress in addressing violence against women, but the specific situation regarding older women and elder abuse is not sufficiently addressed. Also lacking attention are the rights to long-term care and dignity at the end of life.

The European Union, also thanks to the support and push by members of Parliament, has **acceded to the Istanbul convention on eliminating violence against women**. This topic is also important to older women, as many cases of elder abuse are unreported and unaddressed. However, the specific situation of older women and of elder abuse is not very strong in this document. The **directive on victim's rights** also is important for many older people victims of crime.

The introduction **of long-term care in the revision of the EU directive on social security coordination** is an important move and will allow those who move across European borders to access social protection for long-term care available to them in the member state they reside in. On the side of the Commission, an important report has been **elaborated on social protection for long-term care risks** and a **right to long-term care** has been included in the proposal for a European pillar of social rights, an initiative welcomed by the Parliament (see above).

Palliative care and dignity at the end of life is still an topic which is not adequately covered on the European level. Members of Parliament have tried



adequately covered by the European Union. Members of Parliament have also  
to address this in a written declaration.

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