



Council of the
European Union

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SOC 825

NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations
Subject: Draft Council Conclusions on Mainstreaming Ageing in Public Policies

With a view to the meeting of the Social Questions Working Party on 11 January 2021, delegations will find attached a set of draft Council conclusions on the above subject, as prepared by the Presidency.

Mainstreaming Ageing in Public Policies***Draft Council Conclusions*****ACKNOWLEDGING THAT:**

1. Population ageing is an EU-wide challenge with long-term socio-economic implications that brings along opportunities.
2. It is estimated¹ that in 2060 the average life expectancy will increase by 8.5 years for men (to 84.5 years) and by 6.9 years for women (to 89 years), with relatively small discrepancies between Member States. However, there are noticeable discrepancies between Member States as regards healthy life expectancy.
3. The contribution of older people to society – be it to economic performance at the workplace, or as entrepreneurs (producers) or consumers, or to social cohesion as volunteers, caregivers or promoters of intergenerational learning with all their accumulated knowledge and experience – is being acknowledged in the policy debate at European level and of an increasing number of countries.
4. Older people are not a homogenous group; they are diverse in their needs, preferences and opportunities throughout the course of their life.

¹ *Ageing Europe*, Eurostat, 2019 edition, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-02-19-681>.

5. Although significant successes have been achieved in combating poverty among the elderly in recent decades, it is widely agreed that older people² – especially older women – are at great risk of poverty or social exclusion. Older people incomes are on average slightly lower (92%) than that of people in working age. Coupled with a more equal distribution, this income protects comparatively more older people from poverty (in 2019 the at-risk-of-poverty rate of older people was 18.5% as compared to 20.9% in the EU total population). Social transfers, including pensions, play a significant role in decreasing the at-risk-of-poverty rate of older people, but their impact varies greatly between the Member States.
6. Age-related discrimination, also referred to as ‘ageism’, is a frequently occurring phenomenon that stigmatises older people and intersects with other discrimination grounds. It has a significant impact on people’s opportunities, levels of participation, health and well-being occurring in a variety of contexts, such as the labour market, local community, social environment, the consumer society, political arenas, and the media. The complexity and multidimensionality of this discrimination requires comprehensive multisectoral and intersectional approaches and a strong widespread commitment to the ageing agenda at all levels of society. At the same time, new sources of discrimination and exclusion of the elderly should be prevented, for instance by supporting older people in acquiring the skills they need to be part of a society shaped by digital transformation and green transition.
7. Social protection systems must be adapted to cover the needs of all age groups in an adequate and sustainable way. It is therefore essential that population ageing is fully taken into account enabling driving change in this context³. It is also essential to seek and maintain balance in social support across ages.

² https://www.who.int/health-topics/ageing#tab=tab_1.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population_structure_and_ageing.

8. Violence against older people (be it physical, psychological, sexual, economic, in the form of abandonment, abuse or neglect) is an emerging multidimensional reality. It is multi-factorial in its nature and occurs in both family and institutional contexts. This social phenomenon is often difficult to detect due to proximity and power imbalances in the relationships of those involved, demanding well-tailored and community-based monitoring tools. Violence, in particular domestic violence, has a major impact on older women due to their vulnerability and, in many instances, the lack of adequate support services for them.
9. Social isolation and unwanted solitude, which are a consequence of social disengagement in general community-based activities, must be prevented; this can be done by promoting the use of digital technologies that allow people to have easier access to culture and leisure activities, to life-long education and training opportunities, to rehabilitation, healthcare and social care, all of which promote a dignified, meaningful and healthy active life and prevent violence against older people.
10. The expectations, potentials and needs of older people must be considered in the decision-making process of government bodies, whether at national, regional or local level.
11. The exercise of fundamental rights, such as access to tailor-made care services or freedom in decision-making processes, must be guaranteed.
12. Steadily rising longevity poses challenges to, and creates opportunities for, the provision of social support, health and long-term care systems, social security and protection systems (especially pension systems), labour markets as well as to families and intergenerational relations. This requires forward planning, awareness of the potential of older persons and the ability to adapt to social and financial realities. For these reasons, ageing should be mainstreamed in public policies.

13. The ‘silver-economy’ can provide opportunities for the health and long-term care sectors, namely by generating new employment opportunities. It can be a driver of innovation to help provide high-quality care services in a more efficient way.
14. The professional trajectories of older workers were often built around activities and occupations in decline. This poses significant challenges for the updating of skills and knowledge in order to prevent unintended early exits from the labour market and to mitigate the losses in productive potential that these workers represent. In addition to the inherent value of their accumulated professional experience and knowledge, older workers can play a major role in facilitating intergenerational transfer of knowledge, skills and know-how. Adjusting tasks, readapting the intensity of work, promoting healthy work environments, facilitating mobility and valuing lifelong learning should therefore be prioritised.
15. Often, the current social structure and measures taken regarding the ageing of the population are sectoral and fragmented, and are mostly focussed on physical health, while neglecting the much needed progressive perspective aimed at achieving overall well-being.
16. In building a society for all ages, a society prepared for active longevity with people living a longer life – in all its fullness, potential and dignity – it is important to ensure the right to participation, decision-making and autonomy.
17. The living standards of older women and men are also influenced by wealth and access to services, in particular in the field of health and long-term care, but also to employment and participation in society. Quality and affordable public or subsidised services that take into consideration the individual needs of different older people are important determinants for their living standards.

18. Following on from the 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration issued at the 4th UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing, entitled ‘A Sustainable Society for All Ages: Realizing the potential of living longer’, it was considered essential to "further mainstreaming ageing into relevant policy areas and combating ageism in its many forms", providing EU Member States with guidelines for the development of transversal policies across society.
19. Mainstreaming ageing must be a multidimensional strategy that integrates active ageing and longevity issues into all policy fields at all levels of decision-making.
20. [Action Plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights].
21. [Disability Strategy].
22. [Green Paper on Ageing];

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES TO:

23. DEVISE a national Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Ageing in which guidelines and recommendations are given on how to maximise the benefits, to deal with the potential risks and to address the main challenges of the increasing longevity of the population, and IMPLEMENT this Framework in all relevant national, regional and local policies;
24. PROMOTE coherent, coordinated and transversal public policies in order to respond to the complexity of the challenges and opportunities that longevity presents, allowing smooth transitions over the life cycle;

25. ENSURE a transversal and lifelong approach to longevity, based on a human rights approach, and with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, in the public, private and third sectors. CONSIDER an approach that encompasses the need of people of all ages, considering that old age wellbeing starts early in life;
26. IMPROVE access to and quality of healthcare, long-term care including by developing and ensuring access to services that provide older-person-centred and integrated care and fostering enhanced integration between health and social care to maintain and improve older persons' physical and cognitive capacities;
27. CONTINUE to modernise social protection systems and ensure the balance between adequate coverage of all age related risks and financial sustainability, ensuring thus dignity for all ageing conditions;
28. CONSIDER alternative and more flexible retirement pathways providing incentives for a longer active working life;
29. LOOK for innovative and creative mechanisms to promote solidarity and intergenerational interaction, through fostering volunteering among older and younger people, in order to avoid loneliness and isolation, and to combat all forms of violence, including domestic violence, abuse and neglect against older people;
30. COMMIT to further active and healthy ageing, and full integration of older people into society and into the community;
31. ADAPT social responses to the specific individual needs of older people, whenever possible, and according to their wishes;

32. DEVELOP a constructive culture towards older people, fostering a positive image of them, in order to promote an inclusive society that does not segregate, discriminate or spread prejudice against them (gerontophobia);
33. PROMOTE the implementation of the Guiding Principles of Active Ageing⁴, in particular regarding those related to the working environments, adapting work-places to the needs of an ever-ageing work-force, promoting safe and flexible working conditions in order to prevent age-related discrimination in employment, encouraging employers to retain older workers, including the possibility of expanding professional activity beyond the usual pensionable age, if desired by the older worker, and enabling a longer, more active and healthier working life for the worker;
34. TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION the special conditions or needs of older people with disabilities; promote accessibility in product, services, living spaces, and, in particular:
35. DEVELOP support services that help older people to adapt their housing so that they can keep on living safely in their own home, if they so wish. Affordable, safe and accessible housing can maintain or improve health, well-being and social connections as people grow older, and can greatly improve quality of life and autonomy;
36. SUPPORT sustainable urban and rural planning that promotes mobility, safety, convenience and well-being, and facilitates participation in social life for older people and access to all needed services and infrastructure, taking into account their specific individual needs;
37. PROMOTE the development of public transport networks adapted to all citizens, with routes that are appropriate to the needs of older people, in order to ensure their full mobility;

⁴ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-17468-2012-INIT/en/pdf>

38. CREATE network mechanisms (public or private), using integrated and digital tools, that guarantee the safety of older people in all its dimensions and have the ability to monitor their needs;
39. PROMOTE strong investment in the ‘silver economy’ as a way to advance local development, territorial cohesion and economic growth, by valuing the productive and purchasing capacity of older people;

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE AREAS OF COMPETENCE AND WITH DUE REGARD TO THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, TO:

40. MOVE TOWARDS a society for all ages, taking into account the dual approach of mainstreaming ageing: the ageing of the population with the responsibility for society to prepare and adapt to the individual needs of citizens, throughout their lives; continue encouraging and enabling active, healthy ageing; address disparities between older women and older men;
41. COMMIT to considering older people from a biopsychosocial and environmental perspective, taking account of their individual needs and preferences, promoting self-determination, autonomy and civic participation;
42. Jointly WORK towards implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights and its principles for people of all ages, including the principles related to the right to access quality health and long term care services, old age income and pensions and equal opportunities.

43. DEVELOP measures to ensure intra- and intergenerational solidarity and equity, strengthening sustainability but also social cohesion, and taking into consideration the needs, expectations, responsibilities and potentialities of current and future generations;
44. ACKNOWLEDGE that greater active longevity requires stronger investment in lifelong learning and in occupational safety and health, support the implementation of orientations in the Council Conclusions on the Rights of Older Persons in time of Digitalisation⁵;
45. HAVE representatives from different age groups – including children, young and older women and men at all stages of public decision-making processes – empowering older persons in order to enhance their civic and political participation;
46. ENSURE that, at all ages, citizens have sufficient economic and social resources ensuring their wellbeing and a life in dignity at all stages of life and effective as well as access to enabling goods and service;
47. DEVELOP targeted occupational safety and health practices for elderly workers, contributing to better ageing at work;
48. IMPLEMENT the European Skills Agenda, to promote education and training provisions designed for and adapted to older people, in order to maintain and improve their skills and thereby support their active participation in the labour market and their social inclusion, especially through the development of digital skills;
49. PROMOTE active citizenship and the participation of older people at local and regional levels;

⁵ Doc 11717/2/20 REV 2.

50. TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION the special situation of older people, women especially, who have caring responsibilities, particularly the care of persons with disabilities;

51. [Disability Strategy];

52. [Green Paper on Ageing].

INVITES THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE AND THE SOCIAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE TO:

53. PROMOTE a life-cycle approach in their respective activities;

54. CONTINUE to develop reliable and internationally comparable indicators for measuring the well-being of older people in all policy fields within the Committees' remit.

