



ESO (European Senior Organisation) – PES-seniors

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What about European Senior Policy?

In the aftermath from European Elections from June, 9 2024, European Union enters in a new five years period. A new Parliament, a new European Commission, new power-divisions.

ESO has draft his “ESO memorandum for the European elections 2024” and strongly support the AGE-Europe Manifesto 2024. After elections, it seems us important to transform our memorandum into a multi-annual action programme, being a roadmap for the next years for our political action. It contains 4 pillars and 8 working points and will be further elaborated where necessary at our seminars and actions in the coming years.

In our political action we will work in strong collaboration with

- our partners in our European social-democratic family: the ***S&D group in the EP***, the ***PES group in the COR***, our ***Party of European Socialist (PES)***, the ***Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)*** and the sector organisations in PES (***PES-Women, YES, Rainbowrose***);
- in the civil society at European level, in collaboration with ***AGE-Europe platform, FERPA, Solidar***;
- and last but not least, with ***our member organisations***, where we want to give European themes a stronger presence as they increasingly impact the daily lives of our older citizens.

Multi-annual Programme 2024 - 2029

Introduction.

The contribution of older persons to society is largely unrecognised. According to a European Commission report (2018) the size of the European Silver Economy is estimated at €3.7 trillion. It continues to grow and is expected to contribute over €5.7 trillion to Europe's economy by this coming year. The 60-plus segment is the fastest-growing consumer group in the world (WHO 2022) and the increasing demand for goods and services create more jobs and revenue. One fifth of persons aged 65 to 74 in the European Union participate in formal volunteering (Green Paper on Ageing 2022). This valuable participation in the economy of older persons, even if not remunerated, is considerable. However, the contribution of older people is not adequately captured in the standard measures currently in use. Our governments and the European institutions must go ‘beyond GDP’ in order to develop a more comprehensive approach to measuring prosperity and well-being.

To ensure older people's autonomy and quality of life multidimensional and multilevel responses are needed.

Therefore, the European Senior Organisation, together with AGE Platform Europe, is asking for an **EU Age Equality Strategy** that encompasses the challenges and opportunities of aging holistically, setting a comprehensive agenda, and providing policymakers with tools and recommendations for measures and actions, to be implemented at European level and by Member States to advance the rights of older people.

First Pillar: Old is not "out"

ESO advocates for a *fundamental shift in the narrative about older persons and strives for a rights-based approach to ageing*. The dominant conservative discourse narrows down the view of the "elderly" as mere "care and pension dependent persons."

A shift to the narrative is needed that sees "older persons" as full contributors to society from the perspectives of "active-citizenship, self-determination, emancipation and equality", and for which "solidarity" is a necessary component.

1. Recognition of older persons as full citizens and actively participating in policy and decision-making.

ESO advocates for the full-participation and involvement of older citizens in politics and policy-making. **The recognition of older persons as emancipated and active citizens requires organisational structures within the national political parties that involve directly older party members and senior citizens organisations in decision-making structures and advisory bodies.**

ESO actively promotes the setting up of a **European Parliament Intergroup for 'Europe for all ages'**, that provides a platform between civil society and MEPs for the development of policy-making and initiatives.

ESO also advocates for **public funding of civil society organisations that work** for awareness-raising, participation and education of their target-groups.

2. Non-discrimination and fight against ageism

An intergenerational pact should be based on intergenerational solidarity bringing together all generations, promoting more equality and inclusion, combating unwanted loneliness and exclusion. ESO advocates for an **action programme against ageism and discrimination on age and for promoting intergenerational solidarity.**

ESO calls for the reopening of the discussion on **the Commission Proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment outside the labour market,**

irrespective of age, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religious belief. Such a Directive provides a comprehensive protection against discrimination in key areas of life.

We recommend the **intersectionality and mainstreaming of age equality in all European Union existing strategies** such as those in relation to equality between women and men, LGBTBIQ+, migrants and different minority groups.

Better **mainstreaming of “ageing” as a touchstone for the development of new policies** can be achieved by setting up a specific service within the Commission.

Second Pillar: Fundamental Rights

3. UN Convention for Older Persons

ESO strongly supports the **UNECE initiative for a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons** and urges the European Union and Member States to actively consider the elaboration of this Convention. Support from the European region is essential for this Convention to come into being.

We need to ensure that citizens have access to these rights in accordance with Article 25 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. This requires systematic monitoring and ESO calls for the reinforcement and extension of the scope of the **EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in Vienna** with a specific mandate to monitor the access of older persons to their fundamental rights.

ESO also advocates the establishment of regional and national agencies with a low access threshold where seniors or their representatives can seek support and advice about access to their rights.

4. Adequate income

ESO calls for a European framework for access to a minimum income (including pensions) above the poverty line. In 2019, 22% of EU mobile citizens were at risk of poverty and social exclusion against 37% of third country migrants. In the coming years, they may face higher risks of old-age poverty due to shorter careers within the EU. (Green Paper on Ageing 2022).

We also call for **European measures to close the pension gap between men and women.** The risk continues to be higher for specific groups such as women who tend to earn less, have shorter, less linear careers, work part-time and take on more unpaid care responsibilities. Women’s pensions in the EU are on average 29.5% lower than men’s.

We also call for the consideration of measures that support **access to lifelong learning and education, reskilling and upskilling, mental and physical wellbeing, making work less stressful, especially towards the end of a professional career.**

5. Access to care and health services.

ESO appreciates greatly the work done by the former Commissioner on Social Affairs Nicolas Schmit on the setting up of a European Care Strategy. Within the framework of the **European Equality Strategy**, we will strive to open a reflection on the creation of an “**European care guarantee**” that supports Member States and Regions in care-policies and investment in care-services and facilities.

We also call for urgent reflection on a European labour market policy in the care and health sector and advocate **a European curriculum for care professions that guarantees good practice, working conditions and remuneration for employees in this sector.**

We appreciate the work that has been done in combating the COVID19 crisis and the period since, and ask that efforts to achieve **a European health union** continue unabated.

Third Pillar: Age-friendly Habitats

6. Promoting Age-friendly Cities and Communities

ESO support strong social and cultural movements for the **re-invention of our Cities, Towns and Villages** with the perspective of age equality.

Age-friendly cities and communities contribute to enhanced inclusion and connection between people. For this reason, ESO advocates the European Union adhesion to the WHO programme “**age-friendly cities and communities**”.

Even though the local and regional authorities are the ideal level for the realisation of age-friendly cities and communities, the European Union can make a substantial contribution to the realisation of the objectives in many policy areas. These can range from the conditions for obtaining European subsidies, European procurement rules, the establishment of standards and labels for products and services, standards for the construction of public places, for accessibility that give priority to vulnerable persons, and for the development of policy for public transport and mobility.

ESO welcomes the attention paid to housing by the European Commission, as demonstrated in dedicating a Commissioner responsible for this sector. However, it is expected that this Commissioner is also given the necessary administrative tools and support to do so.

Within this mandate, we ask for specific conceptual focus on “**building for life**” and “**adapted housing**” for older persons based on the principle of age equality, as well as providing a framework for **redesigning the habitat** conducive to a better quality of life and an enhanced community life, making the streets and open spaces more accessible for all ages.

ESO also supports the concept of the ‘**ten-minute city**’ wherein all the essential services are within a short walking distance from each other.

7. Digital exclusion and exclusion from services.

ESO advocates a radical rethinking on digitalisation and a recognition that digitalisation may lead to exclusion if not the dramatic dualization of our societies. Indeed, digital exclusion may form serious obstacles for many citizens, especially the most vulnerable, making it difficult to obtaining the services and resources to which they are entitled. This is not a phenomenon that needs investment and can be solved by entirely through education and training.

ESO advocate **an in-depth reflection on the Digital exclusion and ensuing lack of access and calls for a moratorium on the further digitalisation of services.**

Face-to-face service provision must remain the basis of all service provision; digitalisation can contribute to strengthening this face-to-face service provision.

ESO calls for legally binding regulation that oblige service providers and public authorities to offer non-discriminatory face-to-face services in line with consumer protection regulations and taking into account the Services Directive.

Fourth Pillar: Financing and Governance

8. Investing in Age Equality

ESO calls for an age equality perspective in the debate for the forthcoming Multi-annual Financial Framework in the context of the demographic realities;

ESO calls on the European Union to budget for adequate investment for such systems that ensure age equality in the provision of goods, services and the habitat and to sustain older people's autonomy at all levels.

ESO also calls for equalisation funds aimed at overcoming territorial gaps.

ESO advocates for **investment at European and national level to foster a favourable national context for working in the care sector** and to improve the working conditions and skills of formal and informal carers, often women.

ESO looks forward to the **European Development Bank investment schemes that support habitat redesign and affordable housing.**

ESO calls the European Union and Member States for specific support programmes to national, local and regional authorities, which are often responsible for providing, commissioning or overseeing long-term care services.

Ageing has consequences for the financing of the social systems and services in the Member States and regions. This requires a **reform of the financing at Member States level and a rethinking of European economic and fiscal coordination, and of the tax systems in the direction of fiscal justice.**

