



Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth



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TRABALHO, SOLIDARIEDADE
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REPUBLIC OF
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MINISTRY OF LABOUR, FAMILY
SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EQUAL
OPPORTUNITIES

Trio Presidency Declaration on Ageing



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Germany, Portugal and Slovenia, the Member States holding the presidency of the Council of the European Union during the 18-month period from July 2020 to December 2021, hereby present this joint Trio Declaration on Ageing.

Population ageing is an unprecedented phenomenon in human history. It creates many challenges and opportunities for policy-makers and citizens alike. Demographic changes are at least as important as the challenges in the fields of climate and technological developments. They affect every area of our lives and transform our societies.

Europe is growing older. Longer life expectancies are one major development within the Union, with women's life expectancy at birth being 5.5 years higher than that of men; older persons being the fastest growing age group in the European Union; increased life expectancy being paired with an increase in years of good health. This age group, which is very heterogeneous owing to differences in individual life situations, strives to preserve autonomy throughout old age and increasingly demands a say in determining the way that society should deal with the topic of ageing.

Human rights are inalienable and their enjoyment must be guaranteed independent of age. The protection of human rights is a core value of the European Union and a prerequisite for sustainable and inclusive growth and the functioning of our democracies. Their full enjoyment is one of the key indicators of free, open and just societies. This

founding principle of the European Union also holds true during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The European Pillar of Social Rights, which sets out, amongst others, principles relating to better living conditions for all people, regardless of their age, must not be challenged during the pandemic. We bear in mind in particular: the right to education, training and lifelong learning (1), which is also stated in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal ('SDG') 4; the right in old age to resources that ensure living in dignity (15); the right of timely access to affordable, preventive and curative health care of good quality (16); the right to affordable long-term care services of good quality, in particular home-care and community-based services (18), as well as access to essential services, including digital communication (20). Now we need to ensure that we are all committed to its implementation through the Action Plan.

We – Germany, Portugal and Slovenia – stand united and will act united in our ambition to strive for the full enjoyment of all human rights, for full participation in society, economy, culture and politics and for the well-being of older persons in Europe and the world.

Recalling

The European¹ and international human rights framework² that obliges and encourages the international community to guarantee the full

enjoyment of all human rights to everyone, regardless of age or impairments.

¹ The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the European Social Pillar, and respective Council Conclusions, i.a. Human Rights, Participation and Well-Being of Older Persons in the Era of Digitalisation (9 October 2020)

² International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy for the UNECE Region.

Stressing that

Older age is a result of a long life process. In order to remain active in older age, investments in the process are needed throughout the course of life.

The living conditions of older persons are diverse and may depend, for instance, on their income, state of health, level of education and integration in family and social networks, but also on their gender, sexual orientation and gender identity or an experience of migration and displacement or flight.

Adequate and sustainable social protection systems, including access to quality care services, are of key importance for the life quality and well-being of older persons.

Older persons contribute considerably to the functioning of free and democratic societies. According to Eurostat's publication 'Ageing Europe', older persons dedicate a lot of their time to unpaid work. More than one fifth of older persons in the EU between 65–74 years participate in formal volunteering. People aged 75 and older remain highly engaged, their health permitting. Furthermore, older women in particular provide so-called care work, mainly within their families, be it caring for their partners, dependent people or grandchildren, thereby supporting the middle-aged generation in balancing work and family life. During the COVID-19 pandemic, older persons have taken on tasks for the community, either by returning from retirement as medical or nursing staff, or in voluntary services to relieve others in their everyday lives.

Older persons are among the groups especially affected by COVID-19 and the measures taken to counter the pandemic. They are more likely than all other age groups to suffer from severe health complications as a result of contracting the disease. The measures taken to contain the pandemic, such as social distancing rules, lockdown measures, the closing of institutions, etc., affect older persons to a high degree and questions are raised regarding the worsening of pre-existing pathologies or mental health. Most people living in care homes are elderly and might not be allowed to receive visits from relatives. In addition, many social care institutions have suffered from constraints on account of staff shortages. Older persons living alone face challenges in undertaking everyday tasks, due to lockdown and other measures. Digital health care and out-patient care have been available to a limited degree. Very old persons in particular, often do not have access to and do not participate in digital communication and have therefore faced additional restrictions in terms of social interaction and participation.

Older persons have the right to dignity and the recognition of their contributions to economic performance and society as well as to strengthening intergenerational and intragenerational solidarity.

Older persons have the right to a decent life and full participation in public, social and cultural life, as well as in education and continuous training. Digital involvement increasingly guarantees active participation, not only in times of a pandemic. For some older persons digitalisation can also be an obstacle. Hence, there is a need to improve digital skills and the accessibility of digital services.

The Trio presidency calls for

1. Adopting an age-integrated, rights-based, life-course perspective approach to ageing, also by dedicating a chapter to the rights of older persons in the European Commission's "Green Paper on Ageing".
2. Mainstreaming ageing in all policy fields in order to help societies and economies adapt appropriately to demographic change with a view to societies that accommodate the needs and interests of all ages, strengthening social inclusion and solidarity between the generations.
3. Adopting a life-course approach to ageing to the benefit of all generations and society as a whole.
4. Following a rights-based approach in shaping exit strategies from the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Ensuring that the requisite protective measures in times of health crises are proportionate in the extent to which such measures affect older persons' rights and interests, especially their psychological health and quality of life.
6. Access to adequate and sustainable social protection systems and guaranteeing the right to health care, including equal access to health care that is based on an informed and specific consent and basing decisions in medical matters on ethical principles focused on human dignity, the protection of human rights and well-being and the achievement of the highest possible quality of life. Criteria such as a person's age should not be the sole determining factor but should only be applied within the context of a clinical assessment of an individual patient's health condition.
7. A stronger commitment of the EU Member States and the EU Commission to take measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and discrimination against older persons. Violence against women and domestic violence has a particular impact on older women due to them being vulnerable and often lacking adequate support services.
8. The active involvement of older persons in all decision-making processes affecting their lives and the development of mechanisms for the participation of relevant civil society organisations in decision making.
9. The promotion of active and healthy ageing, also by using the positive impact of digital technology in public services, such as health and social services.
10. Closing the digital divide between younger and older generations as well as between older women and men, namely by strengthening different forms of education and training, life-long learning opportunities and the development of skills, including technological and digital skills, which are highly important for participation in the digital world and in social life to foster the autonomy of older persons. Accessibility of digital services should also be developed.

11. Dedicating a separate chapter on older persons in the announced 2021 'Action Plan on the Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights' to enhance their autonomy and participation in active life.
12. The identification of possible gaps in the international human rights system for older persons and if there are gaps, the development of adequate responses to close them.

To reach these aims, we strive to organise a meeting of the responsible Directors-General of the Member States back to back with a civil society conference in order to start a periodic meeting cycle to improve the exchange of views and coordinate activities in the field of ageing between Member States, when the pandemic permits such meetings.

Activities to be carried out during the presidencies of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia

GERMANY

We want to ensure that older persons fully profit from the benefits of digitalisation, bearing in mind that digitalisation is not a panacea but one piece in the puzzle. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that being cut off from digitalisation often means being cut off from social, cultural economic and political participation. Also, telemedicine can help avoid unnecessary contact and thus reduce the risk of infection, which in turn reduces the risk of severe medical consequences for older persons. We have noticed a divide in digital skills between older men and women and within the older generation, which we strive to close.

To pave the way, we organised together with Age-Platform Europe and BAGSO (the German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations) an international online conference with over 1,500 participants from more than 60 countries, including all EU Member States, titled "Strengthening older people's rights in times of digitalisation – lessons learned from COVID19", which took place on 28 and 29 September.

On 9 October, the Council of the European Union adopted Conclusions on "Human Rights, Participation and Well-Being of Older Persons in the Era of Digitalisation" which sets an agenda for the Council for the coming years.

PORTUGAL

Population ageing has important and far-reaching implications across all spheres of society. All age groups make equally important contributions to society and to their communities and families, but older persons can make a valuable contribution by making their knowledge and experience available, especially to younger generations. To ensure that they can remain active and live independent lives for as long as possible, policy measures are needed to support their social, economic and cultural integration in all sectors of society. Ageing-related issues therefore need to be integrated into all policy fields in order to bring societies and economies in line with demographic change and, ultimately, to ensure justice and genuine respect among all age groups and generations. It is with this objective in mind that

Portugal, during its presidency, intends to adopt Council Conclusions about the mainstreaming of ageing in all relevant public policies for active and healthy ageing thus contributing to give a greater focus to this complex cross-cutting issue and to encourage the adoption of initiatives in this area.

We also welcome the European Commission's Green Paper on Ageing, on which we intend to promote a broad debate contributing to raising awareness of the implications in various areas such as pension systems and, at the same time, draw attention to the problems of the elderly and the need to adopt an integrated approach that values their rights and the role they play in society.

SLOVENIA

The Slovenian presidency will promote the life-course approach to ageing by giving it a prominent role in the organised discussions.

The key message of planned activities is that active ageing largely depends on appropriate personal and policy choices and investments throughout the life course. The economic benefits of investing in the well-being of all age groups of the population could significantly slow down the increase of age-related expenditure. The successful life course-based approach to ageing could result in increasing the

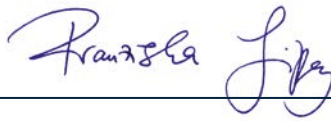
healthy life years to the benefit of older persons (creative and active life, full participation in society) and society as a whole (intergenerational solidarity, silver economy, lower age-related costs).

The Slovenian presidency would like to raise awareness among the relevant stakeholders that a life-course approach to ageing could lead to a win-win situation in tackling demographic challenges and creating more sustainable societies.

Trio Presidency Declaration on Ageing

DECEMBER 2020

Germany, Portugal and Slovenia, the Member States holding the presidency of the Council of the European Union during the 18-month period from July 2020 to December 2021, hereby present this Trio Presidency Declaration on Ageing.



Franziska Giffey

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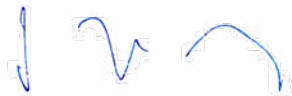
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