



TOWARDS AN AGE-FRIENDLY EUROPEAN UNION BY 2020

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Introduction

AGE Platform Europe is a European network of around 160 organisations of and for people aged 50+ which aims to voice and promote the interests of the 150 million senior citizens in the European Union and to raise awareness on the issues that concern them most. Its work focuses on a wide range of policy areas that impact on older and retired people. These include issues of anti-discrimination, employment of older workers and active ageing, social protection, pension reforms, social inclusion, health, elder abuse, intergenerational solidarity, research, accessibility of public transport and of the build environment, and new technologies (ICT). The Platform takes also active part in several EU projects, mostly funded by the 7th Framework Programme.

On the framework of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012 (EY2012), AGE coordinated a coalition of stakeholders, the so-called EY2012 Coalition, in order to promote active ageing and intergeneratio-

nal solidarity through the creation of an age-friendly European Union. The coalition was an informal group who committed to working together to achieve a society where everyone is empowered to maintain their physical and mental capacity, play an active part in society and enjoy equal rights and opportunities in all stages of their 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.

The article below gives an overview of the activities and vision of the EY2012 Coalition and makes an initial assessment of the main outcomes of the European Year 2012.

The European Year 2012 at a glance

2012 was the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (EY2012). It marked the 10th Anniversary of the United Nation's International Plan of Action on Ageing

that was adopted in Madrid in April 2002.

The EY2012 served as a framework to raise awareness, identify and disseminate good practices and encourage policymakers and stakeholders at all levels to promote active ageing and support greater intergenerational solidarity. In particular, the Year aimed at:

- Helping people to stay at work longer by promoting active ageing in employment
- Combating social exclusion among older people by promoting active citizenship, volunteering and caring
- Preventing dependency through enabling healthy ageing and independent living
- Promoting a society for all ages and enhancing cooperation and solidarity between generations

This European Year was the result of the advocacy work of AGE Platform Europe and the EY2012 Coalition, including the Yuste Foundation.

The EY2012 Coalition and its vision of an age-friendly European Union

In order to promote active and healthy ageing, as well as solidarity and cooperation between generations, the EY2012 Coalition used the European Year as a key opportunity to promote an age-friendly European Union by 2020.

The Coalition believed that empowering

older people to age in good physical and mental health and to contribute more actively to the labour market and to their communities should help our societies better cope with our demographic challenge in a way that is fair for all generations. In order to promote active and healthy ageing, as well as solidarity and cooperation between generations, the Coalition called for an age-friendly European Union by 2020. This was the goal of its joint Manifesto that was presented at the European Parliament in November 2011 and is available on AGE website in English, French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Slovenian, Bulgarian and Polish. The document also included a list of recommendations on how to reach this goal at EU, national and local levels.

What are the benefits of an age-friendly European Union?

Promoting age-friendly and supportive environments across the EU contribute significantly to the following Europe 2020 key objectives:

- Increase the employment rate of both young and older workers;
- Reduce the number of younger and older people at risk of poverty and social exclusion;
- Help older people to remain healthy and autonomous as they age, thus increasing the average healthy lifespan of European citizens;
- Develop more efficient health, long-term care and social services for our

ageing population and support innovative solutions for active and healthy ageing;

- Help better match training and skills demand through occupational training and life-long learning opportunities for workers of all ages.

The EY2012 Coalition's key recommendation at EU level: an EU Covenant on Demographic Change

Many of the services and policies that enable citizens of all ages to play an active role in society and stay in good health are provided by local and regional actors: transport and urban infrastructure policies, health and long-term care services and trainings are just some examples. Therefore, we need to support local and regional actors to adapt to demographic change in a way that is fair and sustainable for all generations.

There is at present no EU network in existence which enables all stakeholders interested in promoting and supporting age-friendly environments (AFE) to link up, benefit from each other's experience and work together on shaping the EU agenda on active and healthy ageing. For this reason, the EY2012 Coalition members and an increasing group of stakeholders joint forces to campaign for the launch of an EU Covenant on Demographic Change that will seek to create the necessary political and technical framework to bring together local and regional authorities – and other stakeholders – across the EU who want to find smart and

innovative evidence based solutions and to facilitate the creation of an EU repository to support active and healthy ageing and develop age-friendly environments.

The objectives of the Covenant would be to:

- promote a comprehensive and integrated approach of ageing in linking all relevant stakeholders working at local, regional and national levels on the promotion of age-friendly environments;
- create a European network of age-friendly local and regional authorities supporting the same vision of a society for all ages;
- build synergies between local and regional initiatives and relevant EU policy processes, such as the development of national programmes to support local and regional initiatives to create age-friendly environments, the Knowledge and Innovation Community for healthy living and active ageing etc;
- facilitate the exchange of good practices, experiences and ideas.

Initial assessment of the outcomes of the 2012 European Year and overview of the EY2012 coalition activities

Awareness raising activities

The European Year succeeded in raising awareness of the need for an age-friendly European Union, identifying and disseminating good practices and encouraging po-

licymakers and stakeholders to make commitments in this direction. AGE and the EY2012 Coalition actively contributed to make it possible.

AGE Platform Europe participated in about 200 seminars, events or meetings to promote the campaign and all the Coalition members organised events to mark the European Year. More than 20 Coalition members published and disseminated position papers, publications and reports on different aspects of ageing and intergenerational solidarity. The promotional material of the campaign was also translated in different European languages and thousands of copies were disseminated. Good collaborations were created at national level between our Members and the National Coordinators. In some countries, like in France and Italy, AGE members managed to coordinate national coalitions and agreed on common recommendations to national policy makers.

Many best practices of the Coalition were promoted on the official website of the Year. And some were presented at the Year's closing conference in December. Other initiatives were illustrated in the EY2012 Roadmap, a document that presents some of the concrete commitments to promote an age-friendly European Union. The European Commission also launched the European Year 2012 Awards to celebrate organisations and individuals that promote active ageing and solidarity between generations through their activities and more than 1100 applications were received.

Political commitments

The Year enabled us to mobilise more than 65 stakeholders that have joined the EY2012 Coalition. It also encouraged a growing number of local and regional stakeholders to promote an age-friendly European Union and to join our campaign. In particular, AGE closely collaborated with the European Local Inclusion and Social Action Network (ELISAN), the European Network of Social Authorities (ENSA) and the Social Inclusion Regional Group (SIRG), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and EURO CITIES, the network of major European cities. It also encouraged policymakers to support the creation of an age-friendly EU.

The idea of the EU Covenant was picked up in the Committee of the Regions' opinion on "Active Ageing: Innovation – Smart Health – Better Lives", which was unanimously adopted on 4 May 2012. It stressed the need to promote age-friendly environments and called on the European Commission to launch the EU Covenant as a legacy to the European Year 2012. It also recommended that EU funds should be allocated for the adequate development of an EU network in close cooperation with WHO and recommended that the Commission should initiate research into providing for the growing numbers of older people a priority.

On 4 June 2012, the European Commission organised a conference on "Good Governance for Active and Healthy Ageing" to look at how different levels of government can cooperate in designing effective

and comprehensive strategies for active and healthy ageing. It gathered about 150 participants from different levels of governance and stakeholders, so that they could move forward jointly. The conference thus aimed to prepare the ground for the development of integrated strategies for active and healthy ageing to be adopted in the wake of the European Year 2012 for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.

The Year encouraged a growing number of local and regional stakeholders to promote an age-friendly European Union and to join our campaign.

On 20 November 2012, AGE co-organised with the Committee of the Regions a thematic seminar on “Creating an Age-Friendly European Union by 2020” in order to reflect on how to make this Covenant possible and what should be done at grass-root level to adapt goods, products and services to the specific needs of all age groups. Together with CEMR, EUROCIITIES and WHO, AGE will also keep on meeting with DG EMPL, SANCO, CONNECT, JUST, MOVE and REGIO to discuss the proposal of an EU Covenant on Demographic Change.

What next?

Now that the European Year is officially coming to an end, the joint work by the EY2012 Coalition, coordinated by AGE, will be continued, using the momentum of the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP AHA).

The EIP AHA was released in October

2010 as part of the flagship initiative “Innovation Union”. It aims at enabling citizens to live longer independently in good health by increasing the average number of healthy life years by two by 2020. As suggested by AGE, the EIP AHA includes the promotion of age-friendly environments as one of its 6 priority actions.

AGE committed to setting up and moderating an EU virtual forum on Age-Friendly Environments (AFE) to link stakeholders (public authorities, NGOs, service providers, industry, researchers) interested in the promotion of AFE at local, regional, national and EU levels. AGE launched the virtual network at the beginning of June and more than 150 stakeholders have already joined the network. In addition, with some of the EY2012 Coalition members and other relevant stakeholders, AGE committed to continuing the campaign to convince the European Commission to launch the above mentioned EU Covenant on Demographic Change. Together with EUROCIITIES, CEMR and WHO Europe, AGE also prepared and disseminated a survey addressed to local and regional authorities on the needs of regions, cities and towns regarding a European Initiative supporting age-friendly environments. The results of the survey will be available in April 2013.

Conclusions

“We are very satisfied with the large mobilisation around the European Year 2012 (EY2012)”, declared Anne-Sophie Parent, AGE Secretary-General, at the closing

conference of the European Year 2012. “The EY2012 has clearly highlighted the need to rethink our economic and social policy framework in order to meet the needs of the growing number of older people while enhancing solidarity between generations. We hope that the numerous actions and commitments made during the Year will lay the first milestone towards a European society for all ages.” AGE is also happy to see that the collaborations built in 2012 will continue in 2013 in the framework of the EIP. This confirms that EY2012 has not just been an awareness raising initiative. The work that has started in 2012 will continue in the years to come with all the interested parties who got mobilised during the Year.

For more information

The EY2012 campaign material is available on AGE website.

Please find also below the first part of the joint Manifesto for an Age-Friendly European Union by 2020, co-signed by the members of the EY2012 Coalition.

Manifesto for an Age-Friendly European Union by 2020

Achieving a society for all ages will require decision makers and all relevant stakeholders to take collective responsibility for designing new ways of organising our societies to ensure a fairer and more sustainable future for all generations. We believe that the current demographic change is a key opportunity for everyone to work together to create an Age-Friendly European Union by 2020.

What does creating an Age-Friendly European Union mean?

Creating an Age-Friendly European Union means fostering solidarity between generations and enabling the active participation and involvement of all age groups in society while providing them with adequate support and protection. Through an Age-Friendly European Union, every age and population group will benefit from:

1. A positive attitude to ageing that recognises the value of all age groups' identities and contribution to society;
2. An inclusive labour market that ensures the participation in paid work of younger and older people, including those with disabilities or chronic conditions, supports the intergenerational knowledge transfer and enables workers to both maintain their health and reconcile their work and private lives;
3. Accessible outdoor spaces, buildings and transport as well as adapted housing and physical activity facilities that promote independent living and participation in society for longer, while increasing opportunities for exchange within and across generations;
4. Goods and services that are adapted to the needs of all;
5. Digital inclusion to enable participation in the increasingly ICT-based society as citizens, employees, consumers, service users and carers, friends and family members;
6. The possibility to have a voice in the

- decision-making and research processes that affect them;
7. The opportunity to actively participate in volunteering, cultural, sport and recreational activities, thus creating and/or maintaining their social networks, gaining new competences and contributing to their personal fulfilment and wellbeing;
 8. Access to lifelong and intergenerational learning to acquire new skills and knowledge at any age;
 9. Social protection systems based on intra- and inter-generational solidarity
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10. Conditions and opportunities to grow and age in good mental and physical health through disease prevention and the promotion of physical activity, a healthy diet, wellbeing and health literacy, as well as action on key social determinants of ill-health.

I <http://www.age-platform.eu/en/about-age/age-members>

II <http://www.age-platform.eu/en/age-policy-work/solidarity-between-generations/campaign/927-list-of-contacts>

III http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/23598_poster_everyone2012_v4.pdf

IV http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/23598_poster_everyone2012_FR_V1.pdf

V http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/EN/EU_Covenant_on_Demographic_Change_Infosheet_Dec2012.pdf

VI http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/23748_manifest_poster_everyone2012_ES.pdf

VII http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/EN/EY2012_Manifesto-NL.pdf

VIII http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/Manifest_za_starosti_prijazno_Evropsko_unijo_do_leta_2020.pdf

IX http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/Manifesto_EY2012_BG.pdf

X http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/EY2012_Manifesto_PL.pdf

XI http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/EN/EU_Covenant_on_Demographic_Change_Infosheet_Dec2012.pdf

XII http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/Updated_EY2012_Roadmap_Coalition_FINALVERSION1.doc

XIII <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:225:0046:0051:EN:PDF>

XIV <http://europa.eu/ey2012/ey2012main.jsp?langId=en&catId=970&eventsId=594&furtherEvents=yes>

XV <http://www.age-platform.eu/en/age-policy-work/accessibility/lastest-news/1544-age-thematic-seminar-on-qcreating-an-age-friendly-european-unionq>

XVI http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?section=active-healthy-ageing

XVII *For more information on AGE work to promote age-friendly environments, please read AGE publication "Towards an Age-Friendly European Union by 2020":* http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/EN/towards_an_age-friendly_eu_by_2020-en.pdf

XVIII <http://www.age-platform.eu/en/age-publications-and-other-resources/age-publication>