Old continent growing older - possibilities and challenges related to ageing policy post 2020

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The European Parliament adopted by 479 votes to 103, with 113 abstentions, a resolution on an old continent growing older – possibilities and challenges related to ageing policy post-2020.

The natural change in the EU population has been negative since 2012, with more deaths than births in the EU, 4.7 million and 4.2 million respectively in 2019. The fertility rate in the EU has been declining, falling to 1.55 in 2018. The working-age population (15-64 years) is projected to decline significantly from 333 million in 2016 to 292 million in 2070. People aged 80 or over are expected to represent 14.6% of the population in 2100.

The current demographic situation has serious repercussions for the EU's social, economic and territorial cohesion. Members therefore stressed the importance of the EU mainstreaming demographic issues into all its policy areas.

Combating discrimination against older people

A 2019 Eurobarometer survey shows that 40 % of people in the EU feel discriminated against on the grounds of age.

Parliament stressed that valuing older people and tackling discrimination against them is only possible through social, cultural and economic inclusion policies which focus on providing **fair pensions** that ensure a good quality of life. It stressed, therefore, the importance of public social security systems that are distributive and based on contributive solidarity between generations, providing everyone, regardless of their own contributions, with a decent quality of life free from poverty and social exclusion.

The Commission and the Member States are called on to:

- strengthen their efforts to combat all forms of discrimination against older people, particularly against women, especially in the areas of employment, access to financial products and services, healthcare, housing, promoting autonomy, education, training and leisure activities;

- promote a **positive perception of old age in society and the social inclusion of older people** by stimulating age-friendly environments in the EU through appropriate measures, and to support the exchange of good practices at all governance levels and strengthen their support for the silver economy in the EU.

Members called on the Commission and the Council to establish a **Year of Intergenerational Solidarity and Active Ageing** in order to raise awareness about the problems older people face and promote strategies to mitigate them. The situation of older people should be taken into account when implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Long-term care for older people

The resolution highlighted that older women are more affected by the high costs of long-term care as women’s life expectancy is higher, while their health outcomes at the end of life are lower, increasing their need for long-term care and assistance. Women make up the vast majority of informal carers, leaving

in particular older women of working age with fewer opportunities to access the labour market and to build up their own pension entitlements.

Parliament stressed the importance of:

- ensuring a decent life for dependent people through quality personalised support strategies that take into account the specific needs of people with different diseases, such as Alzheimer's and dementia;

- using flexible forms of work, allowing women and men to reconcile work and family life;

- ensuring equal access to health and care services, including at home, as well as to institutional and community care services and palliative care, without discrimination on any grounds;

- protecting the right of older people to affordable, comprehensive and quality care and support services that are adapted to their personal needs and promote their well-being, autonomy, independence and inclusion in the community.

Parliament called on the Commission to present an **EU strategy for the care sector** and a European carers' programme. It called on Member States to better recognise the value of informal care and to introduce, in cooperation with the social partners, different forms of support to relieve family members caring for older people.

Active ageing

The resolution stressed that raising the statutory retirement age is not a timely response to the current economic and social crisis, as it may accelerate the deterioration of the fundamental rights of older workers.

Members believe it is essential to provide lifelong learning opportunities adapted to different age groups. In this context, they stressed the need to **strengthen the digital skills** of older people to help them take advantage of online education, but also to improve their access to healthcare and other digital services.

Parliament called for the digital divide to be bridged and for opportunities for labour market integration of older people to be explored, especially in rural and remote areas, in order to combat the depopulation of these regions and the social and digital exclusion of the older population living there. ESF+ and ERDF funds could contribute to the creation of quality jobs.

Member States are invited to ensure a **decent standard of living** for older people and to share best practices, in particular as regards the setting of minimum pensions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need for more solidarity from the EU and in this regard, the Commission is called on to devise and adopt an **EU charter for the rights of older people** on the basis of Article 25 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.