

## Executive Summary of AGE PROGRESS funded work in 2009

### 1. Keynote outcomes:

In 2009, with the support of the PROGRESS programme our network of 150 organisations of senior citizens representing some 28 millions senior citizens across Europe:

- Developed together a [declaration](#) which includes our main policy priorities for the coming years. This declaration was adopted at unanimity by our General Assembly in May 2009 together with our [Annual Report 2008](#);
- Raised awareness and contributed to the debates on the **European Directive on equal treatment in access to good and services** and convinced the European Commission to set up a dialogue group with the insurance and NGOs on age limits that prevent older people from accessing essential services such as health care and insurance/financial services;
- Published a statement on pensions “[Ensuring adequate pensions for all in the EU - a shared responsibility for society](#)” which present our members common position on pensions reform;
- Published a brochure on “[How can the European Union lessen the impact of recession on older workers.](#)” With our recommendations on active ageing;
- AGE President was invited to be a [keynote speaker](#) at the Business Week annual event organised by Business Europe and encouraged business leaderse to lift company mandatory retirement ages.
- Published AGE [assessment](#) of the **2008 National Strategy Reports on Social Inclusion and Social Protection** which includes our members recommendations;
- Launched with the Committee of the Regions a brochure on “[How to promote ageing well in Europe: tools and instruments available to local actors.](#)”
- Campaigned in support of **mandatory European quality standards for long term care** as a tool to fight against elder abuse. The Social Protection Committee (high level group of representatives of national Social Affairs ministries) is now interested to explore with us what the EU could do on quality of long term care.
- Launched the 1st **European Day on Solidarity between Generations** with a coalition of European NGOs ([AIM](#), [AIEP](#), [CECODHAS](#), [COFACE](#), [EAPN](#), [ENAR](#), [Eurochild](#), [EWL](#), [FEFAF](#), [FERPA](#), [Red Cross EU office](#) and [European Youth Forum](#)). To mark the Day, AGE published a [Plea for greater solidarity between generations](#) as a response to the demographic ageing in the context of the present crisis. Our action convinced the European Commission to explore the possibility of having [2012 declared European year of Active Ageing and solidarity between generations.](#)

- Successfully campaigned with a coalition of European NGOs in support of [2011 European Year on Volunteering](#).
- Were actively involved in the preparation of the [2010 European year against Poverty and Social Exclusion](#) together with the coalition of NGOs led by EAPN.
- Successfully ran a campaign with our members to encourage MEPs to support the re-establishment of the **Intergroup on Ageing**. As a result the Intergroup was re-established as [Intergroup on Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity](#).
- Successfully ran a campaign together with a large coalition of health NGOs to influence the debate on the Commission's proposal for a **directive on Information to Patients**.

## **2. Background**

In accordance with our [Strategic Plan 2008-2010](#) and the PROGRESS programme objectives, our [work programme 2009](#) aimed to inform our members and wider public about what is happening at European level of interest to older people and to influence the following key EU policy processes based on our members' feedback:

- The European Union response to the financial and economic crisis;
- The European Equality Framework, i.e. the debate on the proposed new European legislation to ensure equal treatment to all irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation outside employment and the fight against age discrimination in employment;
- The debate on the impact of demographic ageing on public finances and on the European growth and productivity potential;
- The EU objective to improve the participation of older workers in the labour market and to extend working lives;
- The fight against poverty and social exclusion of older people, in particular older women, older migrants and older persons with disabilities;
- The debate on how to make long term care services accessible and affordable to all as well as guarantee their quality and long term financial sustainability;
- The needs and rights of persons providing informal care to dependent relatives;
- The implementation of the new European Health Strategy's objective on healthy ageing;
- The implementation of the European Strategy on new technologies and Ageing which aims to promote ICT solutions to support ageing at work, ageing in the community and ageing at home;
- EU work on public transport and social housing;

- EU regional policy in the field of ageing;
- The EU Research Agenda on ageing;
- The impact of the new Treaty of Lisbon and European Charter of Fundamental Rights on older citizens;
- The European Parliamentary elections in 2009 and re-establishment of the Intergroup on Ageing; the nomination of the new Commission,
- The potential synergies between the United Nations Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy, WHO Age friendly cities project and primary care services programme and EU ageing policies.

### **3. Who is our work programme targeted at?**

Our work programme is primarily targeted at building the capacity of our member organisations and their 28 millions individual members to get involved in an inclusive civil dialogue on European policies of relevance to older people.

Our work is also targeted at European, national and local policy makers and relevant stakeholders whom we try to influence.

### **4. Aims/objectives of our network**

AGE aims to give a voice to older and retired people in the relevant EU policy debates through the active participation of their representative organisations at EU, national, regional and local levels in AGE's work.

AGE seeks to influence EU policies so that they can more adequately reflect the interests of older people in order to achieve a more cohesive society now and in the longer term.

AGE's work focuses on a wide range of policy areas that impact on older and retired people. These include issues of anti-discrimination, active ageing, social protection, pension reform, social inclusion, health, research, accessibility of public transport and of the build environment, and new technologies.

AGE strives to establish good contacts with the relevant Directorates General of the European Commission, the Council and, in particular, EU Presidencies as well as the European Parliament and its Intergroup on Ageing. In our view it is of utmost importance to have constructive contacts with the EU institutions as well as national ministries, permanent representations, regional offices, the Social Protection Committee and the Employment Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, Eurocities, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions and EU trade unions and employers' organisations.

AGE aims to become the key network representing senior citizens across the EU and for that we aim to develop our capacity to respond to the rapidly growing requests for co-operation from external institutions: public authorities at EU, national regional and local levels, universities, researchers, social partners, industry, and other NGOs.

## **5. Results/key findings**

Thanks to the PROGRESS support AGE has been able to build the capacity and representativeness of our members to influence EU and national policy making. Interviews done by our external evaluators of some key policy makers show that AGE is perceived as very representative of older people across Europe, building consensus among its member organisations and favoring alliances between social groups (ex.: solidarity between generations).

Our work helped improve the participation of our members and grass root older people in the most relevant EU policy processes.

According to our members, belonging to AGE network has helped them establish good contacts with their relevant ministries and other national decision makers. It helps them get greater attention in national debates and they are better consulted on ageing policies. For example, they are now better consulted on the national strategic plans on social inclusion and on long term care, but not yet adequately consulted on pension reforms except in a few countries.

In 2009, we were able to bring progress in the field of equal opportunities for all: our work on age discrimination has helped raise awareness of barriers age limits create to older people's participation and free movement. This has resulted in concrete results already in some countries. For example in Sweden, the government has decided to set up an investigation on discrimination in access to goods and services and is looking at age discrimination. Our Swedish members already managed to convince the insurance industry that age limits to insurance and loans are discriminatory and insurers are no longer applying such limits in Sweden.

Thanks to our campaign, dignity in old age and the fight against elder abuse have become a high priority at European level and Member States are keen to exchange good practice in that field. In December 2009, the Swedish Presidency included strong recommendations on the need to coordinate and cooperate on the issue of long term care and dignity of older people.

## **6. Implications for relevant stakeholders:**

- policy makers: For European (members of the European Parliament, European Commission, Council, Committee of the Regions, European Economic and Social

Committee) as well as national policy makers (ministries, local authorities), AGE is resource centre on older people's views and expectations across Europe.

- opinion-makers including mass media, journalists: journalists contact us to get information and concrete examples of the situation of older people and ageing related issues (such as employment of older workers, pension reforms, etc.) across the EU.
- non-governmental organisations: national senior organisations including those who do not belong to AGE network benefit from the wealth of information that is published on our website and monthly on-line magazine; They also get support and receive information when they contact us with specific questions or requests to fund partners.
- Research institutions, think tanks: many of our readers and web visitors are from research institutions. They use AGE website and our monthly on-line magazine as a source of information on European policy development in the ageing field. They also use AGE as a platform to disseminate information about their own research/work on ageing.
- Social partners: we cooperate with the European Trade Union and their retired unionists organisation FERPA. Some of our members work closely with trade unions at national levels on pension reform or employment of older worker.

## **7. Recommendations to:**

- NGOs at national and European level: Building coalitions with NGOs and other stakeholders sharing a same vision is very important to ensure long lasting progress and impact on policy development.
- NGOs and citizens groups: Never give up on an issue your members feel is important even if your objective seems unrealistic at first sight.
- European and national authorities: There is growing interest among national and local older people's organisations to get more directly involved in EU policy development. Article 11 of the new Lisbon Treaty must be translated into concrete action at all levels to enable a more open and inclusive civil dialogue involving all political levels.
- European and national authorities: There is an urgent need to mobilise the baby boomers and help them build ownership and support for the reforms that are needed to ensure the long term sustainability of our social protection systems. Support the proposal to have a European Strategy on active ageing and launch a European Year in 2012 to mobilise all relevant stakeholders at all level to adopt long term commitment in support of active ageing and greater solidarity between generations.