



Introduction to the European Institutions and the European Union Policy-Making Processes of relevance to older people

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Table of Contents

Foreword	1
I. The Lisbon Reform Treaty	2
Major changes resulting from the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty	2
II. The European institutions and decision-making processes	3
1. The European Council	3
2. The European Parliament	4
3. The Council of the European Union	7
4. The European Commission	11
5. Decision-making in the European Union	15
6. The other EU Institutions	17
III. European policies most relevant to older people	19
The Europe 2020 Strategy	19
Employment	20
Anti-discrimination	20
Fundamental Rights	23
Social Protection and Social Inclusion	24
Health	27
Accessibility	28
European Union history in brief	31
Possible future enlargements	32
Useful links	32

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Foreword



An ever increasing number of European Union (EU) policies have a direct impact on older people. This is even more so since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009, which gives new competences to the European Parliament and extends qualified majority voting to a wider range of policy areas.

Consequently, older people's organisations and individual senior citizens have more opportunities to become actively involved in important European debates, so as to advance the rights and interests of the 50+ in Europe.

In order to strengthen public support for the reforms needed to promote equal opportunities for all ages and to modernise social systems across the EU, AGE needs to build and draw on the expertise and active involvement of its member organisations.

Taking into account the new opportunities created by the Lisbon Treaty, this updated document is designed to improve public knowledge and understanding of the European institutions and of the main EU policy processes of relevance to older people. We hope that this brochure will prove to be a useful tool to facilitate a wider understanding of the new EU legislative instruments and to explain how older citizens can get actively involved in civil dialogue through citizens' groups and organisations to influence the outcomes of EU policy making.

The document first takes a tour of the major European institutions and sets out their respective roles in the European decision making processes. The most relevant EU processes and policies are then explained both in terms of their background and current or new methods and for their relevance to older people.

With this updated document we hope to contribute to making civil dialogue more vibrant at national and local level and to help older citizens understand better what the EU brings to older people and how they can help shape policies that affect them.

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 Specific notes and suggestions addressed to older people's associations are highlighted in coloured text boxes such as this one throughout the text.

The full implications of the Lisbon Treaty are not known yet and EU processes and policies will need to adapt to this new legal framework. Updated information will be posted on AGE website at: www.age-platform.eu

To help you understand EU terminology, here are two useful links: A plain language guide to Eurojargon: http://europa.eu/abc/eurojargon/index_en.htm
 EUROVOC - a multilingual thesaurus on the EU: <http://europa.eu/eurovoc/>

Comments and suggestions on how this brochure could be further improved are welcome as we will continue to update it regularly. Don't hesitate to share them with us.

Anne-Sophie Parent
 Director of AGE

I. The Lisbon Reform Treaty



The European Union has changed. The number of Member States has quadrupled. In the past five years alone, the number has almost doubled. The world is changing fast

too. Europe faces huge challenges in the 21st century including the economic crisis, climate change, sustainable development, energy security and fighting international cross-border crime.

The Member States who drew up the Lisbon Treaty together recognized that the existing treaties did not equip the European Union with the tools it needs to face these challenges and deal with these changes. Decisions based on unanimity were increasingly hard to reach and the institutions needed to be revised to function successfully and in an efficient way.

As well as helping to make an enlarged EU work more efficiently, the Lisbon Treaty aims to make it easier to address major issues of the day and provide a boost to Europe's social policy commitments.

The Lisbon Treaty is important for older people, as it recognizes and respects the entitlement to social security benefits and social services providing protection in cases such as dependency and old age.

After years of political uncertainty, the Lisbon Treaty, signed by EU leaders in December 2007, finally entered into force on 1st December 2009.

This historic event in the integration process will have major consequences on the functioning and the policies of the European Union.

Major changes resulting from the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty

The Lisbon Treaty paves the way for a **more democratic and transparent Union**. Among others, it introduces a new form of public participation in European Union policy shaping, the **European citizens' initiative**, which enables one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States to call directly on the European Commission to bring forward an initiative of interest to them in an area of EU competence. The modalities still have to be agreed upon.

The Citizens' Right of Initiative should not be confused with the **right to petition**, which is directed to the European Parliament. A petition usually focuses on infringements of existing European law, while citizens' initiatives will enable citizens to put a new issue on the table and to ask the European Commission to come up with a new initiative to be taken at EU level.

The Treaty increases the number of areas where the European Parliament shares the decision-making power with the Council of Ministers - the so-called **co-decision procedure**. That means that the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) - who are directly elected by citizens - will have much more say in lawmaking and the EU budget.

The Lisbon Treaty also gives **national parliaments in each Member State** a greater role in examining EU laws before they are passed to ensure that the EU does not overstep its mark on matters that should be dealt with at a national or local level.

Qualified majority voting is the form of decision-making used for many Council of Ministers' decisions. Under the Lisbon Treaty, it is extended to many new areas and the way it works is redefined. From 2014, Council decisions will need the support of 55 % of the Member States, representing at least 65 % of the European population. This is known as 'the **double**

majority'. At least four countries will be needed to form a blocking minority. This system places countries with a smaller population on a fairer footing with the larger Member States. In certain areas, decisions will continue to require unanimous approval. These include taxation and defence.

To improve **transparency and access to information** on the way the EU reaches decisions, the Council of Ministers now has to meet in public when it is considering and voting on draft laws. The debates are recorded and accessible on the Council website.

The Lisbon Treaty provides for **a new institutional framework** which will also improve the EU's ability to act: the nomination of a **permanent President of the European Council** for a two-and-a-half year term renewable once, the post of a 'double-hatted' **High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission** responsible for EU action abroad and the defense of EU interests and values

abroad, the reduction of the number of MEPs (with a minimum of six and a maximum of 96 per country). The new '750 plus one' formula assumes that the Parliament President will not exercise his/her right to vote.

Last but not least, the Lisbon Treaty aims to further promote a Europe of rights and values, as well as solidarity and security, notably through the incorporation of the **European Charter of Fundamental Rights** into European primary law, through new solidarity mechanisms aiming at a better protection of the European citizens. The Union gets greater capacity to act on freedom, security and justice. New provisions on civil protection, humanitarian aid and public health aim at strengthening the Union's ability to respond to threats to the security of European citizens.

Finally, the Lisbon Treaty brings in a major change: for the first time countries have the **right to withdraw from the European Union**.

II. The European institutions and decision-making processes

1. The European Council

The European Council consists of the Heads of State or Government of the Member States, together with its President and the President of the Commission. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy takes part in its work.

The European Council defines the general political direction and priorities of the European Union. With the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009, it has become a **full-fledged institution**.

The European Council provides the Union with the necessary impetus for its development and defines the general political directions and priorities thereof. However, it does not exercise legislative functions.

The European Council meets at least twice a year, usually at the headquarters of the Council of the European Union in the Justus Lipsius building in Brussels.

Except where the Treaties provide otherwise, decisions of the European Council are taken by consensus. In some cases, it adopts decisions by unanimity or by qualified majority, depending on what the Treaty provides for.

The President of the European Council, who until the end of 2009 was the Head of State or Government of the Member State holding the six monthly rotating presidency, is now appointed for a two and a half year term (renewable once) on the basis of a qualified majority vote of the European Council. Becoming a full-time function, the President of the European Council gains a permanent character.



At their informal meeting in Brussels on 19 November 2009, ahead of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009, the Heads of State or Government agreed on the nomination of the then Prime Minister of Belgium, Mr. **Herman**

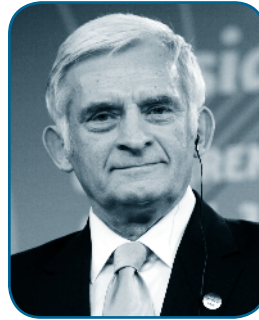
Van Rompuy as the first permanent President of the European Council.

The functioning and the duties of the President of the European Council will have to be further refined in the process of implementing the Lisbon Treaty. According to Article 15 (6) of the Treaty on the European Union, s/he chairs all the meetings of the European Council and drives forward its work. S/he therefore is in charge of the preparation and continuity of the work of the European Council, in cooperation with the President of the Commission and on the basis of the work of the General Affairs Council. S/he has to endeavour to facilitate cohesion and consensus within the European Council. S/he will present a report to the European Parliament after each of the meetings of the European Council. In that capacity, s/he also ensures the external representation of the Union with regard to the common foreign and security policy, without prejudice to the powers of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The President of the European Council is not allowed to hold a national office.

2. The European Parliament

The European Parliament is the only multinational parliamentary assembly in the world elected by universal suffrage and, since June 1979, the European Union's only directly elected institution.

Elections are held every five years. The June 2009 elections coincided with the 30th anniversary of the first European elections by universal suffrage. 736 Members from 27 countries were elected and are now sitting in groups formed on the basis of political affiliation rather than nationality. Members of the European Parliament



are elected once every five years by voters right across the 27 Member States of the European Union on behalf of its 500 million citizens.

European Parliament Presidents serve two-and-a-half-year terms, normally divided between the

two major political parties. For the first half of the 2009-2014 mandate, the President is **Jerzy Buzek**, a Polish member of the European People's Party (EPP). Socialist group leader **Martin Schulz** will take over from January 2012 until June 2014 when new elections will be held.

The European Parliament plays an active role in drafting legislation which has an impact on the daily lives of its citizens: For example, on environmental protection, consumer rights, equal opportunities, transport, and the free movement of workers, capital, services and goods. Parliament also has joint power with the Council over the annual budget of the European Union.

The work of the European Parliament is important because in many policy areas, decisions on new European laws are made jointly by Parliament and the Council of Ministers, which represents Member States. It decides on matters which concern all the citizens of the European Union.

The European Parliament has offices in France, Belgium and Luxembourg:

- The monthly plenary sessions, which all MEPs attend, are held in Strasbourg (France) - the Parliament's 'seat';
- Parliamentary committee meetings and any additional plenary sessions are held in Brussels (Belgium);
- Luxembourg is home to the administrative offices (the General Secretariat).

Number of seats per country (2009 – 2014 parliamentary term)

Austria	17	Latvia	8
Belgium	22	Lithuania	12
Bulgaria	17	Luxembourg	6
Cyprus	6	Malta	5
Czech Republic	22	Netherlands	25
Denmark	13	Poland	50
Estonia	6	Portugal	22
Finland	13	Romania	33
France	72	Slovakia	13
Germany	99	Slovenia	7
Greece	22	Spain	50
Hungary	22	Sweden	18
Ireland	12	United Kingdom	72
Italy	72	TOTAL	736

Number of seats per political group, as at 14.07.2009

Political group	Abbreviation	No. of seats
Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	EPP	265
Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	S&D	184
Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe	ALDE	84
Group of the Greens/ European Free Alliance	Greens/EFA	55
European Conservatives and Reformists Group	ECR	55
Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left	GUE/ NGL	35
Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group	EFDD	32
Non-attached	NA	26
TOTAL		736

Role of the European Parliament



The European Parliament has three main roles:

- **Passing European laws** – jointly with the Council in many policy areas. The fact that the EP is directly elected by the citizens helps guarantee the democratic legitimacy of European law.
- **Democratic supervision over the other EU institutions**, and in particular the Commission. Parliament has the power to approve or reject the nomination of commissioners, and it has the right to censure the Commission as a whole.
- **The power of the purse.** Parliament shares with the Council authority over the EU budget and can therefore influence EU spending. At the end of the procedure, it adopts or rejects the budget in its entirety.

1. Passing European laws: the EP legislative power

Through the co-decision procedure, Parliament shares legislative competence with the Council. This means that it can accept, amend or reject the content of European law (see section on Decision-making in the European Union).

The Parliament also provides impetus for new legislation by examining the Commission's annual work programme, considering what new laws would be appropriate and asking the Commission to put forward proposals.

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 Since the Commission work programme 2010-2014 does not include any proposal to have 2012 declared European year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity – despite the announcement that President Barroso made in July 2008 – those supporting such proposal should encourage their MEPs to put pressure on the Commission to introduce such proposal in their work plan.

2. Democratic supervision over the EU institutions

The Parliament exercises democratic supervision over all EU institutions, and in particular the (unelected) Commission. It has the power to approve or reject the nomination of Commissioners, including the President-elect, and it has the right to make the Commission as a whole resign through a 'motion of censure'.

More generally, the Parliament exercises control by regularly examining reports sent to it by the Commission and by working closely with the Council in certain areas, including input into every EU Summit. MEPs regularly ask the Commission and the Council written and oral questions, and the Council President takes part in plenary debates. Parliament also examines petitions from citizens and has the power to set up temporary committees of inquiry. It also has an appointed Ombudsman who deals with complaints by citizens against the EU institutions.

3. Budgetary Power

The entire EU's annual budget is decided jointly by the Parliament and the Council of the European Union. The Parliament can propose the modification of budget lines and has the power to overrule the Council. Importantly, the Parliament has the power to accept or reject the budget as a whole. In this way the Parliament has an important influence on EU spending.

The Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control (COCOBU) monitors how the budget is spent and each year the Parliament decides whether to approve the Commission's handling of the budget for the previous financial year.

Organisation of the European Parliament



The Parliament meets officially in plenary sessions and parliamentary committees.

- **Plenary sessions** - are attended by all MEPs and are normally held for one week each month in Strasbourg (sometimes also for two days in Brussels). The Parliament examines proposed legislation and votes on amendments before coming to a decision on the text as a whole.
- **Parliamentary Committees** - bring together smaller groups of MEPs that specialise in particular areas of EU policy. They do much of the preparatory work for the debates and votes carried out later in plenary.

The most relevant committees for older people issues are:

- Employment and Social Affairs Committee (EMPL)
- Environment, Public health and Food Safety (ENVI)
- Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE)
- Human Rights (DROI)
- Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON)
- Women's Rights and gender equality (FEMM)
- Financial, economic and social crisis (CRIS, special committee)
- Culture and Tourism (CULT)
- Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO)
- Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE)
- Transport and Tourism (TRAN)
- Regional Policy (REGI)
- Budgets (BUDG)

MEPs also meet in unofficial, voluntary, cross-party groups known as Intergroups.

- **Intergroups** - bring together MEPs to discuss issues of common interest that transcend political divisions. These groups can be an important means to raise awareness about issues of particular concern. It is important for NGOs up to establish good contacts with the groups of MEPs who share many of their concerns.
- Established in 1982, the Intergroup on Ageing is the longest running intergroup in the Parliament. The Intergroup has since worked to make ageing issues visible and to take appropriate actions on behalf of

older people. Since it is an unofficial body of the Parliament, it does not have access to Parliament funds or administration to carry out its work.

The Intergroup on Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity has been re-established on 10 December 2009 thanks to a strong lobby of AGE members. It gathers around 40 MEPs from different political groups. The full list is available on AGE website under European institutions/European Parliament.

The Intergroup is co-chaired by Milan CABRNOCH (ECR, CZ), Kinga GÖNCZ (S&D, HU), Cristina GUTIERREZ-CORTINES (EPP, ES), Jean LAMBERT (Greens, UK), Kartika LIOTARD (GUE/NGL, NL), Elizabeth LYNNE (ALDE, UK), Claude MORAES (S&D, UK), Lambert VAN NISTELROOIJ (EPP, NL)

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 The Intergroup on Ageing is an important vehicle for raising awareness on issues of direct concern to older people within the European Parliament. For example, on the occasion of the 1st World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15 June 2006, the Intergroup on Ageing organised a seminar to raise awareness of the problem of elder abuse. This influenced the Commission to issue a Communication and to organise a European conference in 2008 on elder abuse and on EU quality standards for care services of older persons.

AGE plays an important role in providing support and expertise to the Intergroup on Ageing. AGE members and experts are consulted by the Intergroup's members and often suggest and lobby on amendments to European Parliament texts. These amendments are often taken up. This is a very direct and efficient civil dialogue process which enables older people to influence EU policies and initiatives through their elected MEPs.

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3. The Council of the European Union



The Council of the European Union (often called Council) is composed of one representative of each national government, at ministerial level and is the EU institution representing the Member States.

In the Council each Minister is empowered to commit its government and is politically accountable to its own national parliament. This ensures the democratic legitimacy of the Council's decisions.

The Council is the EU's main decision-making body and jointly with the Parliament, it has the power to adopt, amend or reject laws (legislative power), which are initiated by the European Commission.

The decisions of the Council are generally made by qualified majority voting. Unanimity remains however applicable in a limited number of areas such as taxation and defense.

With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, co-decision has become the "ordinary legislative procedure" in decision-making for most policy areas. It means that neither the European Parliament nor the Council may adopt legislation without the other's assent.

The Council should not be confused with the European Council (see above) and the Council of Europe based in Strasbourg, which is a larger international organisation comprising 47 States including Russia.

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 Since EU decisions are actually adopted by the Council, i.e. national ministers, and the European Parliament, AGE encourages and supports its member organisations to lobby their national governments and MEPs as this is crucial to influence EU policy-development.

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Legally the Council is a single entity, but in practice it is working in different “**configurations**”. There are currently ten different policy areas on which Council meetings take place. Depending on the configuration (policy area), the Council meets several times a year up to once a month. Each configuration is attended by the relevant Ministers from each Member State who are responsible for the policy concerned. For example, The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) is composed of employment, social protection, consumer protection, health and equal opportunities ministers, who meet around four times a year.

On the basis of a six monthly rotation, the Council in its different configurations is chaired by the Member State in charge of the EU Presidency. Under a new arrangement aimed at improving continuity, the Council now works on the basis of a common 18-month programme established by **trios of succeeding Presidencies**. The first trio was composed of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia (January 2007-June 2008), followed by France, the Czech Republic and Sweden (July 2008-December 2009). The third trio combines the Presidencies of Spain, Belgium and Hungary and runs from January 2010 until June 2011. It will then be the turn of Poland, Cyprus and Denmark.

Composition of the Council

There are now ten ‘Configurations’ of the Council of the European Union:

- The **General Affairs Council** deals with dossiers that affect more than one of the Union’s policies, such as negotiations on EU enlargement, preparation of the Union’s multi-annual budgetary perspective or institutional and administrative issues. It co-ordinates preparation for and follow-up to meetings of the European Council. It also exercises a role in co-ordinating work on different policy areas carried out by the Council’s other configurations, and handles any dossier entrusted to it by the European Council.



A priority in recent years for the Council, in cooperation with the Commission, has been to ensure coherence in the EU’s external action across the range of instruments at the Union’s disposal. Under the Lisbon Treaty, the Foreign Affairs Council is chaired by the **High Representative for Common Foreign Affairs and Security Policy**. Catherine Ashton (UK), former Commissioner for Trade, has been appointed as the first High Representative under the Lisbon treaty.

- The **Ecofin Council** covers EU policy in a number of areas including: economic policy coordination, economic surveillance, monitoring of Member States’ budgetary policy and public finances, the euro (legal, practical and international aspects), financial markets and capital movements and economic relations with third countries. It decides mainly by qualified majority, in consultation or codecision with the European Parliament, with the exception of fiscal matters which are decided by unanimity. The Ecofin Council also prepares and adopts every year, together with the European Parliament, the budget of the European Union which is about 100 billion euros.



It is an informal body which is not a configuration of the Council. When the Ecofin Council examines dossiers related to the euro and EMU, the representatives of the Member States whose currency is not the euro do not take part in the vote of the Council.

- The **Eurogroup**, composed of the Member States whose currency is the euro, meets normally the day before the Ecofin meeting and deals with issues relating to the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).

- The **Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council** brings together Justice ministers and Interior ministers about once every two months to discuss the development and implementation of cooperation and common policies in this sector. The creation of an Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, is a key aim of the EU Treaty. Most of the matters in this field are decided by unanimity with a consultation of the European Parliament. Some matters however (visas issues and judicial cooperation in civil matters) are decided by qualified majority, in consultation or in codecision with the European Parliament, depending on the matter.

Denmark, the United Kingdom and Ireland do not participate fully in a number of JHA matters or participate under certain conditions. In particular, the United Kingdom and Ireland do not take part in the Schengen rules on free movement of persons, external border controls and visa policy. The representatives of these States therefore do not vote on these matters in the Council.

- The **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO)** meets 4 times/year and usually decides by qualified majority, acting together with the European Parliament under the codecision procedure (social security is an exception: here the Council acts unanimously). It adopts European rules to harmonise or coordinate national laws, in particular on working conditions (workers' health and safety, social security, employee participation in the running of companies), strengthening of national policies to prevent illness and combat the major health scourges and protection of consumers' rights. Since employment and social protection policies remain the responsibility of the Member States, the Community's contribution is confined to setting common objectives for all the Member States, analysing measures taken at national level and adopting recommendations to the Member States.

Within the Council, and in particular in the framework of the Employment Committee and the Social

Protection Committee, Member States can exchange ideas and information or share the results of their own experiences.

- The **Competitiveness Council** assumes a horizontal role in ensuring an integrated approach to the enhancement of competitiveness and growth in Europe. In that spirit, it reviews on a regular basis both horizontal and sectoral competitiveness issues on the basis of analyses provided by the Commission and give its views on how competitiveness issues can be properly taken into account in all policy initiatives which have an impact on enterprises. It also deals with legislative proposals in its different fields of activity, where it decides by qualified majority, mostly in codecision with the European Parliament.
- The **Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council**: since June 2002 these three policies have been placed under the sole responsibility of a single Council configuration which meets approximately every two months. The composition of the Council varies according to the items on the agenda (Ministers for Transport, Telecommunications or Energy).
- The **Agriculture and Fisheries Council** brings together once a month the Ministers for Agriculture and Fisheries and the European Commissioners responsible for agriculture and rural development, fisheries and maritime affairs, as well as consumer health and protection.
- The **Environment Council** is composed of environment ministers who meet about four times a year. It decides by qualified majority in codecision with the European Parliament. In this sector, the European Community has the task of fostering the harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of economic activities which respects the need, in particular, to ensure a high level of environmental quality.
- The **Education, Youth and Culture (EYC) Council** brings together education, culture, youth and communication

Ministers around three or four times a year. It usually adopts its decisions by a qualified majority (apart from on cultural affairs, where it acts unanimously) and in codecision with the European Parliament.

Powers of the Council of the European Union

All the work of the Council is prepared or co-ordinated by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER), made up of the permanent representatives of the Member States working in Brussels and their assistants. The work of this Committee is itself prepared by more than 150 committees and working groups consisting of delegates from the Member States. For example, the **Social Protection Committee** and the **Employment Committee** prepare the work of the EPSCO Council.

The Council takes decisions by a vote of Ministers from the Member States. There are three types of vote depending on the Treaty provisions for the subject being dealt with: simple majority (for procedural decisions), qualified majority (a weighted voting system based on the populations of Member States; used for many decisions concerning the internal market, economic affairs and trade) and unanimity (for foreign policy, defence, judicial and police cooperation, and taxation).

In a great majority of cases, the Council takes decisions on a proposal from the European Commission and in association with the European Parliament, either through the consultation procedure (e.g. in the areas of agriculture, judicial and police cooperation, and taxation) or through codecision (e.g. the internal market).

EU Presidencies: AGE lobbies future EU Presidencies to ensure that older people's concerns are taken on board. In close consultation with its members in the Presidency country, AGE suggests topics for Presidency events and initiatives.

Social Protection Committee: AGE is regularly consulted by the Social Protection Committee which

is a high level group of Member States representatives who coordinate Member State input into EU social policies. AGE input is informed by its members feedback and recommendations.

Voting in the Council



Decisions in the Council are taken by vote. Each Member State has a fixed number of votes, related (although not proportional to) the population of their country.

Country	Number of votes in the Council
Austria	10
Belgium	12
Bulgaria	10
Cyprus	4
Czech Republic	12
Denmark	7
Germany	29
Greece	12
Estonia	4
France	29
Finland	7
Hungary	12
Ireland	7
Italy	29
Latvia	4
Lithuania	7
Luxembourg	4
Malta	3
Netherlands	13
Poland	27
Portugal	12
Romania	14
Slovakia	7
Slovenia	4
Spain	27
Sweden	10
United Kingdom	29
TOTAL	345

One of the most important changes brought by the Treaty of Lisbon concerns the decision making process in the Council. The default voting method is now the **qualified majority voting** (QMV), except where the treaties explicitly require a different procedure (for example a unanimous vote). In practice this means that qualified majority voting has been extended to almost all policy areas and notably immigration and culture.

The QMV is a system that does not require unanimous agreement by all Member States (which has become increasingly difficult to achieve with the enlargement of the Union), but requires a high degree of consensus.

According to the QMV rules today, a legislative proposal must be supported by a majority of countries (14 out of 27) and by 255 votes out of a total of 345 votes. The countries supporting the proposal must represent at least 62% of the total EU population.

However, according to new rules established by the Lisbon Treaty, a new voting method will be introduced as from 2014: the so-called **double majority voting**.

To be passed by the Council, proposed EU laws will then require a majority of both the EU's member countries (55 %) and the EU population (65 %). This will reflect the legitimacy of the EU as a union of both peoples and nations.

Decisions in some sensitive areas will still have to be taken by unanimity (fiscal matters, social policy, defence, foreign policy and treaty revision). This means each Member State effectively has a veto on these issues.

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In the Lisbon Treaty, policies on anti-discrimination are still considered to be a 'sensitive area' and thus unanimity is required. This makes national lobbying all

the more important as one reluctant government can block all new anti-discrimination legislation at EU level. This is for example the case of the draft directive on equal treatment outside employment which is blocked by Germany (situation in spring 2010)

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4. The European Commission

The European Commission acts as the **executive of the European Union**. It is responsible for proposing legislation, implementing decisions, upholding the Union's treaties and the day-to-day running of the Union.

The term "Commission" is used both to refer to the institution and to the **College of commissioners**. The college of Commissioners (one per Member State) including the President and Vice-Presidents meets every Wednesday in Brussels.

The Commission is based in Brussels, but it also has offices in Luxembourg and representations in all EU Member States.

Although the Commissioners are appointed by the Member States, they do not represent their country in the Commission. They are bound to represent the common interest of the European Union, and the portfolios are attributed by the President of the Commission.

Before the Commission can assume office, the College as a whole must be approved by the European Parliament following hearings of all Commissioners. On 10 February 2010, the election of the Barroso II European Commission by 488 in favour to 137 opposed and 72 abstentions brought to an end almost 5 months of delay due to wrangles in the ratification of the Lisbon treaty and problems with the first Bulgarian candidate.

Once in office, the Commissioners are supported by cabinets, who provide them with political advice. The Directorates General (DGs) on the other hand deal with the more technical preparation of the dossiers.

The **President of the Commission** is nominated by the

European Council. The nominee has however to be elected by the European Parliament. **José Manuel Barroso** won the European Parliament's approval for his second term as European Commission President on 16 September 2009, after a debate and a vote. MEPs approved the five-year term by 382 votes in favour and 219 against.

The **High Representative for Foreign Affairs** and Security Policy is at the same time Vice-President of the Commission. **Catherine Ashton** (UK) is the first High Representative for Foreign Affairs.

The European Commission 2010-2014

The portfolios dealing with policies related to ageing are highlighted

Country	Commissioner	Portfolio	Examples of dossiers relevant for older people
Portugal	José Manuel Barroso	President of the European Commission	Europe 2020
U.K.	Catherine Ashton	Vice-President and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy	
Luxembourg	Viviane Reding	Vice-President, responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship	European Charter of Fundamental Rights, EU non discrimination legislation (draft directive on equal treatment outside employment), gender equality in old age, protection of vulnerable consumers, fight against elder abuse, etc.
Spain	Joaquín Almunia	Vice-President, responsible for Competition	
Estonia	Siim Kallas	Vice-President, Transport	
	EU road safety strategy, accessibility of public transport, passengers' rights, etc.		
The Netherlands	Neelie Kroes	Vice-President, Digital Agenda	e-inclusion of older people, accessibility of new technologies, research on ICT and ageing, etc ;
Italy	Antonio Tajani	Vice-President, Industry and Entrepreneurship	
Slovakia	Maroš Šefčovič	Vice-President, Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration	
Sweden	Cecilia Malmström	Home Affairs	
Germany	Günther Oettinger	Energy	
France	Michel Barnier	Internal Market and Services	Single market for long term care services, regulation of financial services

Austria	Johannes Hahn	Regional Policy	Mainstreaming ageing in regional policies
Belgium	Karel De Gucht	Trade	
Bulgaria	Kristalina Georgieva	International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response	
Cyprus	Androulla Vassiliou	Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth	Life long learning, older volunteering, multiculturalism
Czech	Štefan Füle	Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy	
Denmark	Connie Hedegaard	Climate Action	
Finland	Olli Rehn	Economic and Monetary Affairs	Impact of ageing on public finances
Greece	Maria Damanaki	Maritime affairs and fisheries	
Hungary	László Andor	Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	Employment of older workers, pension reforms, long term care reform, social inclusion and fight against poverty, fight against elder abuse etc.
Ireland	Máire Geoghegan-Quinn	Research, Innovation and Science	Research on ageing
Latvia	Andris Piebalgs	Development	
Lithuania	Algirdas Šemeta	Taxation and Customs Union, Audit and Anti-Fraud	
Malta	John Dalli	Health and Consumer Policy	Healthy ageing, European Strategy on Alzheimer, EU Pact on Mental Health of older people, pharmaceutical package, consumers' rights
Poland	Janusz Lewandowski	Financial Programming and Budget	
Romania	Dacian Cioloș	Agriculture and Rural Development	
Slovenia	Janez Potočnik	Environment	

Commission institution and staff

The Commission employs 32,000 staff – which is not more than that of a big European city. Staff members, who are selected from every EU Member State through very competitive but open procedures, are administrative officials, experts, translators, interpreters and secretarial staff.

The Commission as an institution is divided into 41 departments based around subject areas which can be broadly grouped into four types:

- Policy (18); external relations (6); general services (5); and internal services (12).

Most of these departments are known as Directorates-General (DGs). They have their own staff structures, headed by the Director General. They report directly to one of the Commissioners who is politically responsible for his or her department(s). Other departments are classified as Services.

Role of the European Commission

The Commission's role is to **represent the common European interest** to all the EU countries. It does so by participating in the decision-making process, in particular by presenting proposals for European law, by overseeing the correct implementation of the Treaties and European law, and by carrying out common policies and managing funds.

To allow it to play its role as '**guardian of the treaties**' and defender of the general interest, the Commission also has the **right of initiative** in the lawmaking process. This means that it proposes legislative acts for the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers to adopt.

The Commission is also responsible for putting the EU's common policies (like the common agricultural policy and the growth and jobs strategy) into practice and manage the EU's budget and programmes.

Although the Commission is allowed to take any initiative it sees as necessary to attain the objectives of the EU treaties, most of its proposals are to meet its legal obligations and other technical requirements or because another EU institution, member country or stakeholder has asked it to act.

The Commission's proposals must be grounded in the European interest and respect the **principles of subsidiarity** (in domains where the EU does not have exclusive competence to act) and **proportionality**. This means that the Commission should legislate only where action is more effective at EU level, and then no more than necessary to attain the agreed-on objectives. If it is more efficient to act at national, regional or local level, the Commission should refrain from legislating.

The Commission's vocation is to work for the good of the EU as a whole, and not to favour any EU country or interest group in particular. It consults widely so that all the parties affected by a legislative act can contribute to its preparation. In general, an assessment of the economic,

social and environmental impact of a given legislative act is published at the same time as the proposal itself.

.....
 Although the Parliament and the Council have the final word on eventual legislation, the importance of lobbying those that are drafting the proposal within the European Commission cannot be stressed enough. Once the proposal has gone to the Council and European Parliament, it is indeed more difficult to add aspects that were not included in the original draft as governments and MEPs usually tend to limit the Commission's proposals rather than extend them. Since the Commission defends the common European interest, this lobbying is carried out most effectively at European level. This is one of AGE's main role and our input is informed by our members's contributions.

The Commission has the power to start infringement procedures against Member States which have not implemented the European non equality legislation. AGE therefore informs the Commission of its members' views on the way the EU anti discrimination legislation is transposed and implemented at national level.

Organisation of the European Commission

Although the Commissioners are the recognised 'face' of the Commission, the day-to-day work of the Commission is carried out by the staff in the different departments. The different roles within the Commission structure can be understood by looking at how a legislative proposal comes about.

A typical drafting procedure for an EU legislative proposal in the Commission follows several steps:

- A political decision is initiated by the appropriate Commissioner (responsible for the area concerned). A draft proposal will have to be worked out by the DG concerned.
- To that effect, staff members within the DG concerned will receive instructions from the top. They will first launch extensive consultations with experts, economic

operators, organisations, associations and ministries. This might be done through the publication of a Green Paper which serves as a consultation document calling for comments, reactions and debate within a given time frame.

- The staff drafts a White Paper (draft of legislative proposal) based on the outcome of this consultation upon approval of the responsible Commissioner.
- The proposal is discussed (and amended) with all relevant Commission departments.
- The proposal is checked by the Commission’s Legal Service.
- The proposal is checked by the political staff of the Commissioners’ cabinets.
- The proposal is then placed on the agenda of a meeting of the College of Commissioners where it is presented and defended by the relevant Commissioner. A simple majority vote within the Commission is needed for the proposal to be adopted and sent to the Council and the Parliament for consideration and an eventual decision.

.....
In addition to its broad consultation procedures (Green Papers), the European Commission has set up various advisory groups with external stakeholders to inform its work. These groups meet several times each year and contribute their expertise to helping the Commission prepare its Communications and other initiatives.

AGE sits in the most relevant advisory groups to advance older people’s interests:

- European Health Policy Forum
- European Pensions Forum
- Advisory Group on e-Health
- Advisory Group on e-Inclusion
- Advisory Group on Digital Literacy

AGE members and experts can influence EU policies through these advisory groups.
.....

5. Decision-making in the European Union

Although it is the European Commission that proposes new legislation, it is the Council and the Parliament that pass European laws. In some cases, the Council can act alone. Other institutions also have roles to play.

The rules and procedures for EU decision-making are laid down in the treaties. Every proposal for a new European law is based on a specific treaty article, referred to as the ‘legal basis’ of the proposal. This determines which legislative procedure must be followed. The three main procedures are “co-decision”, “consultation” and “assent”.

Co-decision: This is the most common procedure, also called “ordinary legislative procedure” under the Lisbon Treaty. The co-decision procedure requires official approval from both the Parliament and the Council. Both bodies are on an equal footing and have the chance to propose amendments to the text. Since the Lisbon treaty, the European parliament now has a role to play in almost all lawmaking.

.....
Relevant policy areas for older people covered by this procedure are: economic policies, fundamental rights and fight against discrimination; equal opportunities and equal treatment; the fight against social exclusion and poverty; health such as public health promotion; transport; employment; education; culture; research, services and structural funds
.....

Consultation: the Parliament can accept or reject a proposal as it is presented by the Commission. It may also suggest amendments which the Commission will consider introducing. It is unable to block the proposal. The Council, however, is not obliged to accept the amendments and its decision is final.

.....
Relevant policy areas for older people covered by this procedure are: discrimination on the ground of age (and also on the ground of sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or political conviction, disability, or sexual orientation grounds), tax and economic policies.
.....

Assent: the Parliament can accept or reject a proposal as it is presented by the Commission. However, it cannot amend a proposal. This procedure is the least used, but is applied to certain very delicate and important areas.

.....
Relevant policy areas for older people covered by this procedure are: the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Funds; and certain institutional modifications.

.....
The importance of the Council and the Parliament in EU decision-making means that they are important targets for lobbying activities. Since the members of the Council represent the Member States and the MEPs represent their local constituents, they are often most effectively targeted by national and local organisations.

Enhanced cooperation

Recognising the fact that the Union has grown so big, the Treaty on the European Union (as amended by the Treaty of Amsterdam and the Lisbon Treaty) sets down rules for situations where some Member States wish to proceed with cooperation in a specific area. This is known as 'enhanced cooperation'. Enhanced cooperation means that a group of countries can act together without all 27 necessarily participating. It allows Member States to remain outside if they do not wish to join, without stopping other Member States from acting together. Examples of enhanced cooperation include the Euro zone and the Schengen agreement.

Participatory Democracy

In order to bring citizens closer to the European Union, the Lisbon Reform Treaty includes in its Article 11 various provisions that aim at increasing citizens' participation in the EU decision-making process.

- **The citizens' initiative.**

With the right to **citizens' initiative**, one million citizens are now able to ask the European Commission to present a proposal in any of the EU's areas of responsibility.

On 31 March 2010, the European Commission published its proposal on how to implement Article 11 with regard to the citizens' initiative. The Commission proposes to fix the number of Member States from which signatures must be collected to one third of the total number of EU member States (in 2010, this means signatures must come from nationals from at least 9 out of 27 Member States). The Commission also proposes to set the minimum number of signatures per country using a calculation formula directly linked to the number of MEPs each country has in the European Parliament (number of MEPs of the country X 750). The Commission proposes to set the minimum age for a signature to be valid at the age at which citizens are entitled to vote in the European Parliament elections (18 years for most countries except Austria which has set the threshold for voting at European elections at the age of 16). The Commission's proposal still needs to be approved by the Council and the European Parliament, so some changes may occur in the final decision (updated information will be posted on AGE website).

- **The recognition of dialogue between civil society groups and the EU institutions**

Article 11 of the Lisbon Treaty also recognises the importance of civil dialogue and will enhance the possibility for civil society associations to participate in the European policy-making process. No proposal is made yet on how to organise this part of Article 11.

- **Public meetings of the Council**

The meetings of the Council are now open to the public and accessible 'live' on the Council website. This should facilitate civil society's participation and will enable journalists to inform citizens of the Council debates.

- **Social Dialogue**

With regard to social matters, there are various consultation processes such as the Tripartite Social Summit between the European Social Partners and the EU institutions.

6. The other EU Institutions

The European Court of Justice

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) aims to ensure that EU legislation is interpreted and applied in the same way across the European Union.

A Court of First Instance was created in 1989 to hear certain types of case (particularly those involving private individuals) in order to share the workload of 'the Court'.

The ECJ gives rulings on cases brought before it. The four most common types of case are:

1. **The preliminary ruling:** if a national court is in any doubt about the interpretation or validity of an EU law it may, and sometimes must, ask the European Court of Justice for advice.
2. **Proceedings for failure to fulfil an obligation:** a Member State can be accused of not fulfilling its obligations under EU law by the Commission or another Member State. If found guilty, the Member State must take immediate action to correct the situation.
3. **Proceedings for annulment:** a Member State, the Council, the Commission, the Parliament or even private individuals can ask the Court to annul an EU law if they feel it is illegal.
4. **Proceedings for failure to act:** the Member States, Community institutions and individuals or companies can lodge an official complaint against the Parliament, Council or Commission for failure to make certain required decisions.

The European Court of Justice has one judge per Member State and 8 advocates-general. Their role is to present reasoned opinions on the cases brought before the Court. They must do so publicly and impartially. They are appointed by the governments of the Member States for a period of six years.

.....
The national courts in each EU country are responsible for ensuring that EU law is properly applied in that country. It is therefore very important for AGE to monitor relevant ECJ rulings and let its members

know across the EU as this may have an impact on the way national courts take decisions.

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The European Court of Auditors

The Court of Auditors was set up in 1975. It is based in Luxembourg. The Court's job is to check that EU funds, which come from the taxpayers, are properly collected and that they are spent legally, economically and for the intended purpose. Its aim is to ensure that the taxpayers get maximum value for their money, and it has the right to audit any person or organisation handling EU funds.

The Court has one member from each EU country, appointed by the Council for a renewable term of six years. The members elect one of their number as President for a renewable term of three years. Vítor Manuel da Silva Caldeira, from Portugal, was elected President in January 2008.

The European Ombudsman



The position of European Ombudsman was created by the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht, 1992). The Ombudsman acts as an intermediary between the citizen and the EU authorities.

S/he is entitled to receive and investigate complaints from EU citizens, businesses and organisations, and from anyone residing or having their registered office in an EU country.

The Ombudsman is elected by the European Parliament for a renewable term of five years, which corresponds to Parliament's legislative term. Nikiforos Diamandouros, the former national ombudsman of Greece, took up the post of European Ombudsman in April 2003 and was re-elected in January 2010 for a new five-year term.

The Ombudsman helps to uncover 'maladministration' in the European Union institutions and bodies. 'Maladministration' means poor or failed administration

– in other words, when an institution fails to act in accordance with the law, or fails to respect the principles of good administration, or violates human rights. Some examples are: unfairness, discrimination, abuse of power, lack or refusal of information, unnecessary delay, incorrect procedures.

The Ombudsman carries out investigations following a complaint or on his/her own initiative. He operates completely independently and impartially. S/he does not request or accept instructions from any government or organisation.

.....
 NGOs who wish to complain about maladministration by an EU institution or body need to first contact that institution or body through the usual administrative channels and try to get them to put the situation right.

If that approach fails, you can complain to the European Ombudsman.

You must make your complaint to the Ombudsman within two years of the date on which you became aware of the act of maladministration. You must clearly state who you are, which institution or body you are complaining about and what problem you are complaining about, though you may ask for the complaint to remain confidential.

For practical guidance on making your complaint, go to the Ombudsman's website (see link at end of document)

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Consultative Bodies of the EU

• European Economic and Social Committee

Also known as EESC, the European Economic and Social Committee was established in 1957 with the aim of being an advisory body of nominated individuals representing groups of economic and social interest. The EESC has 344 members – the number from each EU country roughly reflecting the size of its population. The members are nominated by the EU governments but they work in complete

political independence. They are appointed for four years, and may be re-appointed.

The Committee meets in Plenary Assembly, and its discussions are prepared by six subcommittees known as 'sections', each dealing with particular policy areas. It elects its President and two Vice-Presidents for a two-year term. Mr. Mario Sepi, from Italy, became President of the EESC in October 2008.

EESC members are divided in three groups:

1. employers;
2. trade unions;
3. various economic and social interest actors i.e. farmers, consumers.

The EESC has three main roles:

1. to advise the Council, Commission and European Parliament, either at their request or on the Committee's own initiative;
2. to encourage civil society to become more involved in EU policy-making;
3. to bolster the role of civil society in non-EU countries and to help set up advisory structures.

The EESC must be consulted before decisions are taken on economic and social policies. On its own initiative, it may also give opinions on other matters it considers important.

Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) was set up in 1994 as an advisory body composed of nominated representatives of Europe's regional and local authorities to ensure that regional and local identities and interests were respected within the EU. The CoR has 344 members from the 27 EU countries, and its work is organised in 6 different commissions.

1. Territorial Cohesion
2. Economic and Social Policy
3. Sustainable Development
4. Culture and Education
5. Constitutional Affairs and European Governance
6. External Relations

The Committee of Regions has to be consulted on matters that concern local and regional policies such as employment policy, the environment, infrastructure,

transport, education and health. It can also present opinions on any legislative proposal with important regional or local implications.

III. European policies most relevant to older people

The Europe 2020 Strategy

The European Union is currently developing a new common European growth and jobs strategy for the next decade: the 'Europe 2020 Strategy', which is designed to be the successor to the Lisbon Strategy. Coming to its end in December 2010, the Lisbon Strategy failed to achieve most of its initial goals. The 'Europe 2020' strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth will seek to overcome the shortcomings of its predecessor.

The Europe 2020 Strategy goal is to establish a social market economy that is competitive, innovative, sustainable and inclusive. It will promote the sustainability of the European economic model in three ways:

- Economic sustainability: In a context of globalisation with emerging economies, the European economy must base its comparative advantage on competitiveness, innovation and knowledge;
- Social sustainability: The new strategy must place special emphasis on employment, increasing levels of participation, training and employability. Progress must also be made on achieving full labour equality between men and women and reducing poverty;
- Environmental sustainability: The European economy must make a transition towards a low-carbon economic model in order to fight against climate change and create new sources of economic growth.

The Spring Summit in March 2010 debated the Europe 2020 Strategy, which is to be adopted by the European Council in June 2010.

The European Council agreed the following headline targets, which constitute shared objectives guiding the action of the Member States and of the Union:

- aiming to bring to 75% the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64, including through the greater

participation of youth, older workers and low skilled workers and the better integration of legal migrants;

- improving the conditions for research and development, in particular with the aim of bringing combined public and private investment levels in this sector to 3% of GDP; the Commission will elaborate an indicator reflecting R&D and innovation intensity;
- reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20% compared to 1990 levels; increasing the share of renewables in final energy consumption to 20%; and moving towards a 20% increase in energy efficiency. The EU is committed to take a decision to move to a 30% reduction by 2020 compared to 1990 levels as its conditional offer with a view to a global and comprehensive agreement for the period beyond 2012, provided that other developed countries commit themselves to comparable emission reductions and that developing countries contribute adequately according to their responsibilities and respective capabilities;
- improving education levels, in particular by aiming to reduce school drop-out rates and by increasing the share of the population having completed tertiary or equivalent education; taking into account the Commission's proposal, the European Council will set these targets in June 2010;
- promoting social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty. Further work is needed on appropriate indicators. The European Council will revert to this issue at its June 2010 meeting.

In the light of the headline targets, Member States will set their national targets, taking account of their relative starting positions and national circumstances. They will do so according to their national decision-making procedures, in a dialogue with the Commission in order to check consistency with the EU headline targets. The results of this dialogue will be examined by the Council by June 2010.

AGE – together with other social NGOs – took an active part in the EU consultation on the future Europe 2020 Strategy to make sure that key social issues will be included and adequately addressed and active and healthy ageing and intergenerational solidarity will be promoted.

National NGOs will have a major role to play to press their national policy makers (Prime Ministers and MEPs) to include our key social objectives in the final proposal.

Employment



The European Union employment policies aim at reduce rates of unemployment and improving the quality of jobs, in particular through the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs and in

its follow-up, the Europe 2020 strategy. In the context of the international financial crisis, additional measures have been taken to protect existing jobs and to create new opportunities.

Each year, more than EUR 10 billion are invested through the European Social Fund (ESF) to improve job prospects for the population. Projects, co-financed by Member States, support companies in adapting to developments in the economic and social situation. They promote access to lifelong learning and training in order to develop workers' skills.

European Employment Strategy (EES)

The European Employment Strategy is a key component of the Lisbon Strategy. It is the main tool that leads and co-ordinates Member State's employment policies. It aims to help certain disadvantaged groups such as women, and older workers get into the labour market.

The European Employment Strategy was developed in order to encourage exchange of information and joint

discussions by all Member States to try to find solutions or good practices together which could help in creating more and better jobs in every Member State.

In line with the Lisbon Strategy which runs until the end of 2010, the European Employment Strategy's three-year reporting cycle is based on yearly Employment Guidelines, National Reform Programmes, a Joint Employment Report, Recommendations and an EU Annual Progress Report.

The European Employment Strategy uses an open method of co-ordination (OMC), based on five key principles: subsidiarity, convergence, mutual learning, an integrated approach and management by objectives.

The Europe 2020 will aim at achieving an employment rate of 75% for women and men aged 20-64. AGE calls for this target to be broken down per age group and gender to ensure that efforts are deployed to help older workers remain active in the labour market. More information on the employment objectives of the final Europe 2020 proposal will be posted on AGE website as soon as they are adopted by the Council and European Parliament.

Anti-discrimination

Article 10 of the consolidated version of the Treaty on the functioning of the EU



In 1997, the EU was given the power to adopt positive measures to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age or sexual orientation for the first

time by the Article 13 of Amtersdam Treaty.

On 1 December 2009, the new Lisbon Treaty and the article 10 of the consolidated version of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union confirmed the aim of combatting discrimination.

Article 10:

In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall aim to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

Since 2000, the European Union has taken steps forward to protect citizens from discrimination on the ground of race and ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

The Race Directive

In 2000, the Council adopted the Commission's proposal for a directive implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin (2000/43/EC).

The Race Directive is important to older people from ethnic minorities. It requires Member States to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race in the fields of employment, training, education, access to social security and health care, social advantages, and access to goods and services including housing.

The Employment Equality Directive

The Employment Equality Directive sets out a general framework for combating discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation but unfortunately the protection is limited to the fields of employment and occupation.

Member States have transposed this directive to varying degrees. Its provisions are wide-ranging and require detailed consideration, particularly to addressing Article 6 which allows Member States to identify areas where differences of treatments on the ground of age can be objectively justified and where some exemptions from the law may be possible.

Whether this is a reasonable article or not depends entirely on the way it is implemented at national level. While certain cases of differential treatment might be justified, it is essential that Member States are not

allowed to adopt a loose interpretation which allows many unjustified cases of discrimination to be accepted on the basis of negative stereotypes and assumptions.

The Employment Equality Directive is of key importance for all older people. It is a crucial step in combating age discrimination. It deals with issues surrounding age and employment which affect many people over the age of 50.

It is crucial that older people's associations try to ensure that their national governments implement the directive in a way that defends the spirit of the directive and does not serve to 'legalise' age discrimination.

Draft Directive on equal treatment outside employment

Following lobbying action from European NGOs to convince the European institutions that more action is needed at EU level to combat discrimination, the European Commission explored the feasibility of extending legislation beyond employment and proposed a draft directive to combat discrimination on the ground of age, disability, religion and sexual orientation outside employment. The Commission announced this as an outcome of the *2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All*.

Although the draft directive is a major step forward in achieving a European Union free of discrimination, it includes specific provisions with regard to age which would allow Member States to treat older people differently in access to social protection, insurance and financial products, etc.

This proposal is under discussion by Member States in the Council of Ministers. Unfortunately the German government is against this new proposal and can block it as unanimity is still required under the new Lisbon Treaty for EU action on non discrimination.

.....
 The Commission proposal has a direct relevance for older people in the EU in terms of their access to goods, facilities and services. AGE is working with the European anti discrimination networks to ensure that during negotiations at Council level, the proposal is improved with regard to the protection it will bring to older people. Older people should follow the debate at national level and lobby government to adopt the directive.

Gender equality instruments

The EU has developed over the last 30 years a wide range of instruments to combat gender discrimination and promote gender equality. A large body of European legislative texts is dedicated to equality between women and men. This is mainly made up of various Treaty provisions and Directives concerning access to employment, equal pay, maternity protection, parental leave, social security and occupational social security, the burden of proof in discrimination cases and self-employment. The case-law of the European Court of Justice is another key element.

Two important directives forbid gender discrimination in employment (2006/54/EC) and outside employment (2004/113/EC).

A Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men for 2006-2010 was adopted by the Commission on 1 March 2006. This represents the Commission's commitment to driving the gender equality agenda forward. The *European Pact for Gender Equality*, approved by the Member States at the European Council of March 2006, reflects their determination to implement policies aimed at promoting gender equality. A Report on equality between women and men is submitted to the Spring European Council each year.

.....
 The European Institute for Gender Equality was established in 2006 to provide expertise, improve knowledge and raise visibility of equality between men and women.

Gender discrimination is a particular problem for older women and implementation of EU legislation has so far proved inadequate to ensuring that equality between women and men turns from principle into practice. Legislation is essential but not enough. Gender policies are necessary to mitigate the consequences of demographic ageing.

AGE mainstreams the gender dimension throughout its work. Within the framework of the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, AGE published a policy leaflet on promoting gender equality for older people in the EU. This is designed to serve as a lobbying tool for older people's organisations to help raise awareness of the right to gender equality regardless of age.

Follow-up to the 2007 European Year on Equal Opportunities

AGE participated as an active player in the *2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities* for All and is actively involved in its follow-up activities. AGE encouraged its member associations to play a full part in national activities organised by their respective National Implementing Bodies and sought to facilitate their involvement. AGE members reported a generally positive experience with the European Year.

.....
 AGE is carrying forward and building on its achievements made under the 2007 European Year on Equal Opportunities. In particular, it is building on the cross-ground work which it has developed with other EU non-discrimination networks and with the European Youth Forum and European Women's Lobby.

Thanks to our joint lobby we convinced the European Commission to issue of proposal for a directive on equal treatment outside the labour market.

We have also managed to put the issue of age limits in access to insurance and financial products on the EU agenda. Following our call, the European

Commission has set up a dialogue group on insurance which brings together the insurance and banking sectors and AGE to discuss age limits on access to insurance and financial products.

Fundamental Rights European Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union



Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009, the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* provides a legal framework for ensuring the whole range of civil,

political, economic and social rights of European citizens of all ages. The rights in the Charter are divided into six chapters: dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, citizens' rights and justice.

The Charter functions as a legally binding guideline for EU actions as the EU institutions and the Member States have to respect all these rights when they are applying EU law. The European Court of Justice is in charge of ensuring that the provisions of the Charter are respected. The Charter complements other international instruments such as the European Convention on Human Rights.

Article 3 ('the right to integrity of the person'), Article 21 ('non-discrimination') and Article 25 ('the rights of the elderly') are especially important for older people. In particular, they will be able to call upon Article 25 whenever they feel that their right to lead a life of dignity and independence and to participate in social and cultural life is threatened through EU initiatives or policies.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

The *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights* (FRA) is an agency of the European Union which was

launched in Vienna on 1 March 2007. It is the successor to the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). FRA is an independent centre of expertise on fundamental rights issues and its four main tasks are information gathering, analysis, provision of advice, and information and communication. Its governing structure includes a Management Board, an Executive Board, a Scientific Committee and a Director and it became fully operational in 2008.

FRA carries out its tasks independently. It has the right to formulate opinions to the EU institutions and to Member States when implementing Community law, either on its own initiative or at the request of the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union or the European Commission. It does not have the mandate to examine individual complaints nor does it have regulatory decision-making powers.

Civil society organisations such as AGE make a significant contribution to promoting and protecting fundamental rights in Europe and AGE takes an active part in their dialogue with European NGOs.

AGE has successfully lobbied to ensure that the priorities of FRA over the next five years include the fight against age discrimination, measures to increase job opportunities for older workers, and initiatives to tackle gender discrimination faced by older women.

Equality Bodies

The equality bodies are specialised national bodies for the promotion of equal treatment. They are charged with promoting equal treatment on one or more of the following grounds: religion and belief, racial or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, social origin, nationality and others. They have a critical role in assuring the effective implementation of non-discrimination law by providing assistance to victims and monitoring and reporting on discrimination issues.

Co-operation and information exchange between the equality bodies across Europe is facilitated by **Equinet**,

the European coordination of equality bodies. This network aims to help the equality bodies fulfil their mandates by establishing a sustainable network and resource base for the exchange of legal expertise, enforcement strategies, training and best practice as well as provide a platform for dialogue with the European institutions. This is done in order to support the uniform implementation of EU non-discrimination law and the levelling up of legal protection for victims of discrimination.

.....
The equality bodies are a vital source of information and it is important for AGE members to establish good contacts with their respective national equality bodies. This provides avenues through which older people's organisations can feed into national equality processes and ensure that age discrimination is properly tackled at the national level. AGE members are encouraged to monitor and feed in to equality body activities and to try to become listed as reference points by their respective national equality body.

European Alliance for Families and Open Forum on Demography

Demographic change and the ageing of Europe's population is mainly the result of rising life expectancy and low birth rates. In an effort to meet these challenges, the EU heads of state and government, at the European Summit of 8 and 9 March 2007, decided to establish a European Alliance for Families. The aim of the Alliance is to create impulses for more family-friendly policies through exchanges of ideas and experience in the various Member States and to foster cooperation and fruitful learning from each other in the European Union. Once every two years a European Open Forum is organised by the Commission to bring together policy makers, stakeholders and experts from all over Europe, providing them with an opportunity to exchange experience and to discuss policies to tackle the challenges of demographic change.

Social Protection and Social Inclusion



The Lisbon Strategy, which provided the EU framework for policy action and development for the period 2000-2010, highlighted that the EU needed to modernise and strengthen the European Social Model.

EU Member States and the European Commission agreed to take the 'necessary steps to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by 2010'.

The proposal for the new 'Europe 2020' Strategy, to be approved in June 2010, includes an objective of an 'Inclusive growth – a high-employment economy delivering economic, social and territorial cohesion'. The proposed actions under this priority refer among others to: modernising and strengthening national social protection systems; combating poverty and social exclusion; and reducing health inequalities.

The OMC on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (Social OMC)

The open method of coordination is a voluntary process for political cooperation based on agreeing common objectives and common indicators, which show how progress towards these goals can be measured. It is applied in policy areas where the European Union has limited competences according to the EU Treaties but where Member States feel there is an added value in working together at the European level.

The OMC on social protection and social inclusion covers three specific policy strands:

1. Eradication of poverty and social exclusion;
2. Adequate and sustainable pensions;
3. Accessible, high quality and sustainable health and long-term care.

National governments implement the common objectives through national plans as national strategic reports. The national reports are assessed annually by the Commission and Council in joint reports.

The European Commission analyses the information they receive from Member States and issues an annual report to assess progress. This report is called the Joint Report on Social Inclusion and Social Protection because it is drafted jointly by the Commission and the Council representing the Member States. It includes the Commission's analysis of the national reports and recommendations addressed to the Member States, generally and individually with country fiches.

The Social OMC aims also to develop a mutual learning process by presenting and promoting specific policies, programmes or institutional arrangements, considered as good practices from individual countries. One of the key tools in this respect are the Peer Review seminars on social protection and social inclusion which encourage the dissemination of good practices across Member States by assessing the effectiveness of key policies or institutions.

1. Eradicating Poverty and Social Exclusion

In the field of social inclusion, EU action has been centred has helped to create a consensus on the following key challenges:

- to eradicate child poverty by breaking the vicious circle of intergenerational inheritance
- to promote the active inclusion in the society and the labour market of the most vulnerable groups
- to ensure decent housing for everyone
- to overcome discrimination and increase the integration of people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and immigrants and other vulnerable groups to tackle financial exclusion and over-indebtedness.

The 'active inclusion' is a holistic strategy proposed by the Commission to help Member States mobilise those who can work and provide adequate support to those who cannot, including for instance disabled or older workers. It combines income support at a level sufficient for people to have a dignified life with a link to the labour market through job opportunities or vocational training and through better access to enabling social services.

For AGE, although the 'active inclusion' does not refer directly to older people, the strategy should also address challenges with regard to the impact of an ageing population on employment policy. It should mobilise people who are able to work while achieving the wider objective of providing a decent living standard to those who are and will remain outside the labour market.

2. Adequate and Sustainable Pensions

The European Union's policy coordination on pensions was agreed in 2001 and is based on the Social Open Method of Coordination. The Commission has decided to follow two priorities in the area of pensions:

- Adequacy of pension systems;
- Long-term sustainability of pension systems

In order to address the consequences of the free movement of workers for the provision of pensions, i.e. by improving access to supplementary pension schemes, the Commission has also set up the Pensions Forum. This is an advisory committee composed of experts from governments, social partners and representative organisations at the EU level. AGE is the only NGO representing older people in the Pension Forum.

So far, work has focussed on the following areas:

- incentives for working longer;
- promoting supplementary (including private) pensions;
- stronger links between contributions and benefits;
- taking account of increasing longevity when setting benefit levels;
- adequate minimum pensions and minimum income provisions;
- provisions for women and young people;
- credit for caring periods in pension entitlements; and
- automatic or semi-automatic review mechanisms.

In its work programme 2010 the European Commission has decided to launch a Green paper (public consultation) on pensions to look at options for ensuring the sustainability and adequacy of pensions in light of ageing, mobility patterns in Europe and the functioning of financial markets. The Commission is

envisaging to then propose a white paper (proposal for action) on how to reform the EU framework for pensions.

3. Health and Long-Term Care

Member States have agreed to work on three common objectives in the area of health and long-term care:

Access

- **enhancing the provision** of long term care services (a mix of home, community and institutional services)
- **shorter waiting times**
- reaching **all parts of the population** through universal insurance coverage and/or affordable care which does not lead to impoverishment: individual ability to pay or the share of private sources of financing should not hinder accessibility
- **reducing geographical differences** in availability and quality of care across the different settings of care provision

Quality

- priority for tailor-made **home and community care services** to help people live in their home for as long as possible. Where homecare or community care services are not available, their promotion must be ensured via a parallel adaptation of the institutional care setting
- **rehabilitation**
- **informed choice**
- **better coordination** with medical, nursing, social and palliative care
- **quality assurance mechanisms**

Sustainability

- **improved coordination** between different levels of government budgets and between health and social care budgets permitting an adequate continuum of care irrespectively of the different levels of long-term care provision (local, regional, national) and organisation
- sustainable mix of **public and private** sources of finance
- emphasis on **health promotion at all ages** including old age, disease prevention and rehabilitation policies
- ensure **sufficient human resources** through: **formal**

staff training (e.g. geriatrics), motivation and working conditions; help for **informal carers** (training, peer supervision, counselling, respite care, reconciling family care with paid employment)

How can older people's organisations get involved in the OMC process?

Civil society interest groups such as older people's organisations are supposed to be consulted by their national government in every phase of the OMC process - from the development of national policies to the monitoring of Member State implementation. National governments should also consult these groups when preparing their reports to the European Commission. Unfortunately the reality is quite different in many Member States as these reports are drafted by civil servants without consultation of civil society.

What can be done to improve this and what action can you take?

Older people's organisations must establish contact with the civil servants responsible for drafting national OMC reports. For instance, the Ministry of Social Affairs (for the social inclusion strand), the Ministry of Pensions or Finances (for the pensions strand) and the Ministry of Health or Social Affairs (for the health and long-term care strand).

Seniors' organisations must also make their own analysis of national policies when the national reports become available on the European Commission's website (in October each year). They must develop their own assessment of progress made and draw recommendations on areas where improvement is needed.

How can AGE help your organisation get involved in the policy making process?

You can send your organisation's feedback to AGE, which will forward it to the European Commission. This exercise is done with the help of AGE Expert Groups on Social Protection, Social Inclusion and Health. Each year AGE informs its members when the

national reports are posted on the Commission's website and encourages them to analyse these reports and provide feedback. AGE then sends the compiled contributions to the Commission, which uses this information to draft its recommendations to Member States which are included in the Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion.

Health

EU Health Strategy

The importance health policy, and especially the promotion of healthy ageing, has raised in the EU. Even though EU competence to legislate in this area is



limited, in 2007 the EU established, for the first time, a common Health Strategy called 'Together for Health: a Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013' which aims to provide an overarching

strategic framework on core issues in health. It aims to set clear objectives to guide future work on health at the European level, working in partnership with the Member States, and it includes the objective of fostering good health in an ageing Europe.

Second Community Health Programme

The Second Programme of Community Action in the Field of Health 2008-2013 came into force on 1 January 2008. This programme is geared to research in the area of health and is intended to complement, support and add value to Member State's policies. It aims to contribute to increasing solidarity and prosperity in the European Union by protecting and promoting human health and safety, reducing health inequalities and improving public health. Each year, the European Commission publishes a work plan determining the thematic priorities that will be financed. For 2010, three main issues are covered:

- Improve citizen's health security (avert threats to public health like pandemic, bioterrorism, environmental pollution, etc.)

- Promote health (support healthy ageing incl. mental health, health inequalities).
- Generate and disseminate health information and knowledge (address a wide range of issues like eHealth, crossborder healthcare, health technology assessment).

EU Health Policy Forum

The aim of the Health Policy Forum is to bring together European platforms representing stakeholders in the health sector to ensure that the EU's health strategy is open, transparent and responds to the public concerns. The intention is to provide an opportunity to organise consultations, to exchange views and experience on a wide range of topics, and to assist in implementation and follow-up of specific initiatives.

The membership was reviewed in March 2010 and AGE Platform Europe was confirmed as a member of this forum.

The Forum seeks to cover evenly four groups of organisations:

- Non-governmental organisations in the public health field and patients' organisations.
- Organisations representing health professionals and trade unions.
- Health service providers and health insurance.
- Economic operators with an interest in and commitment to health promotion, protection and improvement.

The European pharmaceutical policy

The pharmaceutical sector is extensively regulated by the EU in the dual interest of:

- ensuring the highest possible level of public health and patient confidence in safe, effective and high-quality medicinal products,
- continuing to develop a single EU market for pharmaceuticals to strengthen the European pharmaceutical industry's competitiveness and research capability.

.....
 Example of positive outcome of AGE action: together with other public health related organisations, AGE asked for the shift of the pharmaceutical portfolio from DG Enterprise and Industry (ENTR) to DG Health and Consumer protection (SANCO). Our action succeeded in convincing President Barroso to review the division of tasks and now DG SANCO is responsible for pharmaceutical products and for the European Medicines Agency, whereas DG ENTR continues to deal with the competitiveness of the pharmaceutical industry.

The European Medicines Agency (EMA)

The European Medicines Agency is a decentralised body of the European Union with headquarters in London. Its main responsibility is the protection and promotion of public and animal health, through the evaluation and supervision of medicines.

The EMA has a role to play in protecting the health of all citizens, including the elderly. It engages with regulatory authorities, pharmaceutical companies, organisations representing the interests of elderly people, healthcare professionals and patients themselves to develop harmonised standards for the development, testing, approval and use of medicines for the elderly.

Mid 2000's a Patients' and Consumers' Working Party was created to provide recommendations to the EMA and its human scientific committees on all matters of direct or indirect interest to patients in relation to medicinal products. AGE is a member of this committee.

Ad Hoc Expert Group on the transition from institutional to Community-based care

In February 2009, Commissioner Spidla convened a group of independent experts to address the issues of institutional care reform in their complexity. AGE was invited to participate to this group. This group issued in September 2009 a report that offers not only rationale for change but also provides an analysis of key challenges, followed by a set of Common Basic Principles and concrete recommendations to Member

States and the European Commission. Beyond this report, the expert group will continue to have regular meetings to progress on this issue.

Accessibility



Progress in new technologies (ICT), improvement in transport and in the built environment have a direct impact on their health and quality of life of all and in particular older people. An accessi-

ble transport and built environment, as well as user friendly technologies can assist older people in carrying out daily activities as well as monitor their health, create social networks, facilitate their participation in work or volunteer activities and better ensure their safety.

EU work on transport

The European Union has an important role to play in promoting equal opportunities for all in every sector of society, including public transport.

In 2006, the EU transport accessibility agenda moved forward with the mid-term review of the European Commission's 2001 White Paper on Transport. In this White Paper, which had underlined accessibility as a priority and had set up guidelines, the Commission proposed a number of new tools to achieve its objective of sustainable and more accessible transport, for example through Intelligent Transport Systems.

It is believed that the use of new technologies in all transport modes will cut costs, boost energy efficiency and improve security by providing new services to citizens such as real-time management of traffic flows and tracking possibilities. This technology will have to be user-friendly to avoid any type of exclusion, especially of older people who often have difficulties in dealing with new technologies.

In 2007, the Commission launched a Green Paper on Urban Mobility. Mobility and accessibility in urban areas is an everyday problem for Europe's citizens, in particular for the elderly. The results of a preliminary consultation of all stakeholders show that public transport improvements need to be a priority for the EU and should include the development and implementation of joint solutions.

After having collected the output of the Green Paper Consultation on Urban Mobility, the European Commission released the Action Plan on Urban Mobility in 2009. Taking into account the needs raised by the main stakeholders at European and National level, the Action Plan stressed the willness to make the open dialogue with stakeholders a central point also for the implementation phase.

The same year, the Commission launched a public consultation on Road Safety, whose key results are embedded as background issues for the development of the next EU Road Safety Action Programme 2011-2020. The main outcomes focus especially on the safety of vehicles and of infrastructures and the involvement of citizens, as actors of road safety, thus showing the importance given to the involvement of users.

AGE is regularly consulted by the European Commission on older people's needs in the field of public transport. For example was encouraged by the Commission to respond to the consultation on road safety to bring in the perspective of a particularly vulnerable group of road users.

AGE is also invited to present its members' vision on the importance of seamless travel for older people and other persons with reduced mobility during the TRA2010 Conference, for addressing the needs of all travellers in both rural and urban areas at European level.

Information and Communication Technologies

User-friendly technologies can assist older people in carrying out daily activities, managing their assets, monitoring their health, creating and maintaining social networks facilitating their access to goods and services, increasing their participation in society through work, community or voluntary activities and better ensuring their safety. The use of technology can therefore improve their quality of life and ultimately enhance independent living.

e-Inclusion aims at preventing the risk of digital exclusion. e-Inclusion was launched as part of the e-Europe initiative in 2002 and set a number of targets on e-Accessibility. In 2005 the emphasis shifted to integrating accessibility criteria into mainstreaming goods, services and information flow. The e-Europe 2005 Action Plan lead to the i2010 strategy and is part of the renewed Lisbon Strategy to boost European competitiveness. Inclusion is one of the three pillars of the i2010 initiative with the aim of 'building an information society that is inclusive, provides high quality services and promotes quality of life'. The development of new technologies and services for older people are wide ranging and include: safety-related services, healthcare and medical services, 'wellness services', mobility and social care services, smart homes, smart textiles, robotics and consumer electronics.

ICT and ageing

In 2007, a Communication was launched on 'Ageing well in the information society. An i2010 Initiative Action Plan on Information and Communication Technologies and Ageing' which clearly indicated that technology needs to be tailored to meet the needs of an ageing population in terms of their health, work, quality of life and need for assistance. This Action Plan was accompanied by a new joint European research programme which raised to over €1bn the research investment on information and communications technologies (ICT) that aims to improve the life of older people at home, in the workplace and in society in general.

AGE is a co-partner in several EU funded research projects on ICT and ageing and bases its contribution on its members' feedback. NGOs interested in research on ICT solutions for older people can get involved in EU funded research projects in particular field trials, to bring in their grass root knowledge of older people's needs.

The Ambient Assisted Living initiative

The initiative on Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) initiative was also launched under the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and involves 23 Member States. This programme is intended to address the needs of the ageing population, to reduce innovation barriers of forthcoming promising markets, but also to lower future social security costs. AAL aims - by the use of intelligent products and the provision of remote services including care services - at extending the time older people can live in their home environment by increasing their autonomy and assisting them in carrying out activities of daily living.

Ambient Assisted Living is an important programme for older people. National older people's representatives should try to get involved in the AAL projects funded by their national public authorities to ensure that their requirements are taken on board and that user friendly technology is developed.

A Digital Agenda for Europe

A new Digital Agenda for Europe should be published in 2010 by the European Commission to succeed to i2010. The Digital Agenda is one of the main priorities of the EU2020 strategy and would be the first flagship initiatives to be adopted in this framework.

1. The EU should adopt an EU horizontal legislation on e- and web-accessibility underpinned by standardisation.
2. The EU should strongly encourage awareness raising, training and supporting activities, in line with the needs of older people and persons with disabilities, including 'train the trainers' in informal

local social and family networks as well as local service providers.

3. The EU and Member States should ensure that public e-services and websites, especially e-voting systems, are accessible to all, including persons with disabilities and older citizens.
4. The EU should extend the scope of the Universal Service Directive to cover mobile phones and broadband access to Internet services.
5. The EU should ensure cross border exchange of copyrighted content is available at no extra cost to persons with disabilities through a copyright exception in the Internal Market Directive.
6. The needs of older people and persons with disabilities should be taken into account right from the outset and along the whole production chain to develop accessible ICT products and services.
7. The participation and involvement of older people and persons with disabilities in policy-making, research, development and implementation of ICT products and services should be compulsory and financially supported by public funding schemes.
8. E-health products and services should be accessible to older people and persons with disabilities.
9. ICT solutions embedding privacy into their systems by design should be particularly encouraged, while monitoring of the operation of such systems should also take place.
10. The EU should play a significant role in ensuring that e-products and services are accessible, affordable, safe and secure for all, including older people and persons with disabilities.

European Union History in Brief

18 April 1951:

- European Coal and Steel Community established.
- Signatories: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.

25 March 1957:

- The Treaties of Rome establishing:
 - the European Economic Community (EEC)
 - the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM)
- Signatories: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands.

1 January 1973:

- First enlargement of the European Communities:
New members: Denmark; Ireland; United Kingdom.

7-10 June 1979:

- First direct elections by universal suffrage to the European Parliament.

1 January 1981:

- Second enlargement of the European Communities:
New member: Greece.

1 January 1986:

- Third enlargement of the European Communities:
New members: Portugal; Spain.

17 February 1986:

- Single European Act established:
 - provided for the achievement of the Single Market.

7 February 1992:

- The Maastricht Treaty (the Treaty on European Union) established the European Union based on Three Pillars:
 - the European Community (replacing the European Economic Community to reflect cooperation beyond economic policy);
 - intergovernmental cooperation in Foreign and Security Policy;
 - intergovernmental cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs.

22 June 1993:

- The Copenhagen European Council agreed to accept new members from Central and Eastern Europe provided they satisfied certain economic and political criteria (the Copenhagen Criteria).

1 January 1995:

- Fourth enlargement of the European Communities:
New members: Austria; Finland; Sweden.

26 March 1995

- The Schengen Agreement abolished passport controls at the borders.
- Signatories: Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

17 June 1997:

- Treaty of Amsterdam amending: the Treaty establishing the European Community (Rome) and the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht). Article 13 on non discrimination provided a legal base for action at EU level to combat discrimination and promote equal opportunities on the ground of age.

26 February 2001:

- Treaty of Nice established: one consolidated Treaty combining the 'Treaty establishing the European Community' and the 'Treaty on European Union'

December 2001:

- European Council in Laeken established: the Convention to prepare an Intergovernmental Conference on the Constitution of Europe.

1 January 2002:

- Euro launched as the common European currency in 12 of the 15 EU Member States (except: Denmark; Sweden and the United Kingdom).

1 May 2004:

- Fifth enlargement of the European Union:
New members: Cyprus; the Czech Republic; Estonia; Hungary; Latvia; Lithuania; Malta; Poland; Slovakia; and Slovenia.

29 October 2004:

- A Treaty established a Constitution for Europe signed by the EU Member States. After rejections by France and the Netherlands, EU leaders announced a period of reflection.

1 January 2007:

- Sixth enlargement of the European Union: New members: Bulgaria; and Romania.

1 January 2007:

- Accession of Slovenia to the Euro-zone.

13 December 2007:

- Signature of the Lisbon Reform Treaty.
- Ratification process started in all 27 Member States.

1 January 2008:

- Accession of Cyprus and Malta to the euro zone.

10 December 2008

- Sweden ratified the Lisbon Treaty, bringing the total to 25 countries.

1 January 2009:

- Accession of Slovakia to the Euro-zone. The eurozone now includes 16 Member States.

19 November 2009:

- Appointment of Herman Van Rompuy as first European Council President under the Lisbon Treaty

1 December 2009

- Treaty of Lisbon entered into force.

Possible future EU enlargements

Albania: Albania applied for membership of the European Union on 29 April 2009.

Croatia: Croatia applied to join the European Union on 21 February 2003. Accession negotiations started on 3 October 2005.

Iceland: Iceland applied for membership on 16 July 2009.

Macedonia: The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia applied to join the European Union on 22 March 2004 and negotiations were opened on 17 December 2005.

Montenegro: Montenegro applied to join on 15 December 2008. The Commission's opinion will be

submitted to the Council in the course of 2010. Montenegro is experiencing ecological, judicial and crime-related problems that may hinder its bid.

Serbia: Serbia applied on 22 December 2009. However many domestic problems need to be resolved and extensive reforms to be implemented.

Turkey: Turkey applied for membership in 1987. After many concerns over political arrangements and human rights issues, accession negotiations were opened on 3 October 2005.

Useful Websites

European NGOs

AGE Platform Europe: <http://www.age-platform.eu>

Platform of European Social NGOs (Social Platform): <http://www.socialplatform.org>

European Anti-Poverty Network: <http://www.eapn.org>

European Youth Forum: <http://www.youthforum.org>

European Women's Lobby: <http://www.womenlobby.org>

European Disability Forum: <http://www.edf-feph.org>

European Network Against Racism:

<http://www.enar-eu.org>

ILGA-Europe - the European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA):

<http://www.ilga-europe.org>

Equality bodies

Equinet: www.equineteurope.org

National equality bodies:

<http://www.equineteurope.org/361.html>

European Union Institutions

Europa - Gateway to the European Union:

<http://www.europa.eu>

European Council:

<http://www.european-council.europa.eu>

European Parliament:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu>

Council of the European Union:

<http://consilium.europa.eu>

European Commission: <http://ec.europa.eu>

Court of Justice of the European Communities:

<http://curia.europa.eu>

European Court of Auditors: <http://eca.europa.eu>

European Ombudsman: <http://ombudsman.europa.eu>

European advisory bodies

European Economic and Social Committee:

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/>

Committee of Regions: <http://www.cor.europa.eu>

Other European bodies

European Union Agency on Fundamental Rights:

<http://fra.europa.eu/fra/index.php>

European Medicines Agency (EMA):

<http://www.ema.europa.eu/>

EMA dedicated website on medicines for the elderly:

<http://www.ema.europa.eu/htms/human/elderly/introduction.htm>

European Central Bank: <http://www.ecb.eu>

European Investment Bank: <http://www.eib.org>

EU law

EU Treaties and law: <http://europa.eu/abc/treaties>

Lisbon treaty: Your Guide to the Lisbon Treaty: <http://ec.europa.eu/publications/booklets/others/84/en.pdf>

Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:115:SOM:EN:HTML>

Summaries of legislation:

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/index_en.htm

EUR-LEX - the portal to European Union law:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/index.htm>

Access to EU case law:

<http://curia.europa.eu/en/content/juris/index.htm>

PreLex - the database on inter-institutional procedures:

<http://ec.europa.eu/prelex/apcnet.cfm?CL=en>

Legislative Observatory of the European Parliament (OEIL):

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/>

EU legislation to combat discrimination:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=612&langId=en>

Employment Equality Directive:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32000L0078:EN:HTML>

Race Equality Directive:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32000L0043:en:HTML>

European Charter of Fundamental Rights:

http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2007/c_303/c_30320071214en00010016.pdf

European 2020 Strategy

European Commission Europe 2020 proposal:

http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/pdf/complet_en.pdf

Europe 2020 timeline: http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/pdf/annex3_en.pdf

Europe 2020 Architecture: http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/pdf/annex2_en.pdf

Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities: <http://ec.europa.eu/social>

PROGRESS Programme:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=327>

Action against discrimination and civil society:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=423&langId=en>

2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/eyeq/index.cfm?cat_id=SPLASH

Community Employment Policies: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/community_employment_policies/index_en.htm

Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2010: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=757&langId=en>

Equality between women and men

EU action on equality between women and men:

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/equality_between_men_and_women/index_en.htm

Directive on equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men in employment and occupation: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/equality_between_men_and_women/c10940_en.htm

Directive on equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men outside the labour market: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/equality_between_men_and_women/c10935_en.htm

European Institute for Gender Equality: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=732&langId=en>

European Alliance for Families: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/families/index.cfm

European Open Forum on Demography: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=556&langId=en>

Health

European Union activities on public health:

http://europa.eu/pol/health/index_en.htm

Public Health Portal of the European Union - the elderly:

http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/my_health/elderly/index_en.htm

Ageing and health: http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_information/dissemination/diseases/age_en.htm

Healthy Life Years: http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_information/indicators/lifeyears_en.htm

EC Health Indicators: http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/health_in_the_eu/ec_health_indicators/index_en.htm

White Paper on EU Health Strategy 2008-2013: http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/Documents/strategy_wp_en.pdf

Second Programme of Community Action in the Field of Health 2008-2013: http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/pgm2008_2013_en.htm

Healthy Ageing: keystone for a sustainable Europe:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_information/indicators/docs/healthy_ageing_en.pdf

New Technologies

European Union activities on information society:

http://europa.eu/pol/infso/index_en.htm

Thematic Portal on Europe's information society:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/index_en.htm

Riga Declaration on ICT for an inclusive society:

http://www.eu2006.bmsg.gv.at/cms/eu2006EN/attachments/3/7/5/CH0631/CMS1142844810665/declaration_riga_en.pdf

Ageing well in the information society - an i2010 initiative:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0332:FIN:EN:PDF>

Ambient Assisted Living: <http://www.aal-europe.eu/>

Transport

Activities of the European Union on Transport:

http://europa.eu/pol/trans/index_en.htm

Rights on people with reduced mobility in the EU:

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/transport/air_transport/l24132_en.htm

Road safety and older drivers:

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/users/elderly-drivers/index_en.htm

EU terminology

A plain language guide to Eurojargon:

http://europa.eu/abc/eurojargon/index_en.htm

EUROVOC - a multilingual thesaurus on the EU:

<http://europa.eu/eurovoc/>

PROGRESS PROGRAMME

This publication is supported for under the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013). This programme is managed by the Directorate-Generale for Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities of the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

PROGRESS mission is to strengthen the EU contribution in support of Member States' commitments and efforts to create more and better jobs and to build a more cohesive society. To that effect, PROGRESS will be instrumental in:

- providing analysis and policy advice on PROGRESS policy areas;
- monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in PROGRESS policy areas;
- promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and
- relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large

For more information see:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html

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King Baudouin Foundation

Working together for a better society

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The King Baudouin Foundation is an independent and pluralistic foundation. We provide financial support to around 2,000 organizations and individuals annually. The Foundation also acts as a forum for debate and reflection and fosters philanthropy. With an annual budget of 48 million euros, the Foundation looks for sustainable ways of contributing to justice, democracy and respect for diversity.

We operate out of Brussels, but are active at regional, Belgian, European and international level. Our Board of Governors sets out broad lines of action, which are implemented by some 60 colleagues. The Foundation was created in 1976, to mark the 25th anniversary of King Baudouin's reign.

The King Baudouin Foundation has been active for many years on issues around ageing and intergenerational solidarity. Recently it has provided financial support to 172 projects which help older people play an active and meaningful role in society and create sustainable and reciprocal relationships between generations.

The Foundation set up two reflection groups composed of individuals who are active in the voluntary sector, social movement and enterprises and who, after one year of exchange of ideas and experience, concluded with a series of proposals for action.

The Foundation organised a cycle of seminars on intergenerational solidarity to widen the public debate on these issues. The outcome of the work done by these two groups is described in a publication "Une Société pour tous les âges" (a Society for all Ages) which contains examples of intergenerational projects. The publication is available in French and Dutch on our website and includes an Executive Summary in English.

www.kbs-frb.be



Louis Bonduelle Foundation

Sustainable evolution of eating behaviours

The Louis Bonduelle Foundation is a non-profit organisation which mission is to promote the public usefulness of vegetables, focusing on their benefits for the public good.

Consequently, the Foundation wants to support the people's sustainable evolution of eating behavior. Created in 2004, it intends to grow up in the long term, giving everybody the means to increase their daily intake of vegetables, by raising awareness, in a useful, concrete and attracting way. Its program is based on three pillars:

- informing and raising awareness
- developing field initiatives
- supporting research



The foundation decided to get closer involved in the elderly because successful ageing is linked to healthy eating. It supports the Global Funds of Research against Cancer on a project aimed at identifying obstacles to vegetable consumption among people aged 50 years and over. Finally, in collaboration with the AGE platform, the Foundation presents some recommendations on the promotion of a healthy diet among elderly people.

www.fondation-louisbonduelle.org



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