

Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels

Brussels, 9th February 2021

Interest Group on Solidarity between Generations – First reaction to the Green Paper on Ageing

Dear Vice-President Šuica,

We welcome timely publication of the Green Paper on Ageing. As a group of Members of European Parliament uniting behind the EU Treaty principle of Solidarity between Generations, we welcome that solidarity and responsibility between generations has been chosen as a theme for the Green Paper, as well the positive and life-cycle approach taken. While demographic challenges have been present and calling for comprehensive policies for a long time, the COVID-19 pandemic, its catastrophic impact on intergenerational ties and disenfranchisement of many older persons, especially in the context of long-term care settings has made these policies all the more urgent.

We welcome the effort to integrate intersecting grounds of vulnerabilities in the Green Paper including gender, residence and disability status, as well as the comprehensive set of policy areas addressed by the green paper. You have highlighted the need for different solutions which are all essential and complementary: a social protection perspective on quality long-term care, focus on quality of life including in depopulated areas, education and life-long learning in a perspective going beyond the labour market, inclusive employment policies, promotion of active lifestyles and health promotion, harnessing the opportunities of the digital age to improve assistive technologies, adaptation and accessibility of physical living environments including age-friendly workplaces, transport and urbanism.

We would like to underline that to ensure solidarity between generations, policies need to be based on the access to the full set of human rights at all ages. However, ageism is mentioned only once in the Green Paper, and no reflection is induced on how to complete the legal framework on equal treatment on the ground of age. We regret this omission and hope that non-discrimination and tackling the stigma linked with ageing will be an integral part in the follow-up of the Green Paper.

While the threat of old-age poverty found its place in the Green paper, there are no mentions of decent and flexible pensions and other social rights of retired people. We would also like to draw your attention on better protection of senior consumers against practices that lead to exclusion, such as in the digitalization process of banking and payments.

We welcome that family and informal carers are mentioned in relation to the importance of work-life balance and quality, affordable and accessible community based supporting services. However, their social protection and inclusion needs, such as access to respite, training, financial compensation, pension rights, leave from work and protection from dismissals beyond the provisions of the Work-Life

Balance Directive have not found a mention in the consultation. Closing the gender care gap through an equal sharing of the care between women and men is essential for a sustainable future, as well as the full inclusion of the gender equality angle in the thinking around the revalorisation of formal care work and involvement of more men in the care profession. The integration of medical and social care, to respond also to psychological or social needs of older persons, is important to build more efficient and humane care systems.

While Green paper rightly underlines the problem of loneliness, the growing social exclusion, its consequences on health, including mental health, on intergenerational links and on the social fabric, of both younger and older person exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic remains only briefly mentioned. We acknowledge the importance of better using innovation and new technologies to create better, more accessible environments and support the principle of universal design for the benefit of all generations, all while cautioning against an excessive reliance on technology at the expense of social bonds and human relationships.

We are committed to participate in the consultation process launched by the Green Paper and look forward to working with you to develop a longer-term strategy on ageing embedded in the European Pillar of Social Rights and human rights principles.

The members of the Interest Group on Solidarity between Generations:

1. Milan Brglez, MEP
2. Tatjana Ždanoka, MEP
3. Jarosław Duda, MEP
4. Brando Benifei, MEP
5. Klemen Grošelj, MEP
6. Radka Maxová, MEP
7. Elisabetta Gualmini, MEP
8. Manuel Pizarro, MEP
9. Antonius Manders, MEP
10. Atidzhe Alieva-Veli, MEP
11. Klára Dobrev, MEP
12. Estrella Dura Ferrandis, MEP
13. Sirpa Pietikäinen, MEP
14. Irena Joveva, MEP
15. Stelios Kympouropoulos, MEP
16. Carles Puigdemont I Casamajó, MEP
17. Antoni Comín I Oliveres, MEP
18. Clara Ponsatí Obiols, MEP