



Launch of AGE Manifesto for the European Parliament elections 2014

On 5 November 2013, AGE Platform Europe launched its Manifesto for the European elections 2014 in the European Parliament during an event hosted by Claude Moraes MEP (S&D, UK). The event was the occasion for AGE to present its priorities and recommendations to candidate MEPs.

“We will all be old one day”, said Claude Moraes in his introductory speech, underlining that ageing is not a minority issue. He stressed on the necessity to focus on interactions between the different age groups and to address needs arising as people age.

Marjan Sedmak, AGE President, underlined the changes that demographic ageing will bring and strongly called on older persons to participate in the EP elections to ensure that the right candidates are in elected and fight against euro scepticism, demagoguery and hate speech.

AGE campaign will largely be dedicated to promoting EU citizenship among senior Europeans, encouraging people to vote and highlighting relevant dossiers for older persons to candidate MEPs, added Anne-Sophie Parent, AGE Secretary General. AGE Manifesto is based on AGE campaign “Towards an age-friendly EU by 2020”, launched on the occasion of the European Year 2012 on ageing and solidarity between generations, and suggests concrete actions MEPs can take to build a society for all ages, free from discrimination.

To support the Manifesto, AGE is preparing a more detailed document, explaining further what MEPs, but also future European Commissioners, can do for older Europeans. AGE has also launched a blog, “Towards an Age-friendly European Parliament” (towardsanagefriendlyep.com), aimed at becoming a hub on AGE EP elections campaign,

gathering commitments from candidate MEPs, testimonies from older Europeans, training material on EU citizenship and news from all over Europe about ongoing campaigns for the elections. This blog will serve as an interactive and comprehensive tool to discuss and share information on issues of concern for older persons in Europe.

These issues may notably encompass access to basic services, social relations, neighbourhood exclusion, cultural activities, financial products, civic participation and material goods, explained Matt Barnes, from the UK think tank NatCen. However, not all poor older people have the same experiences of poverty, he added, but all experience increasing difficulties as they age.

Addressing issues of concern for older persons also means looking at mainstream dossiers, such as design-for-all and the upcoming European Accessibility Act, underlined Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP (EPP, NL). He added that a lot can and must be done to preserve the quality of services in Europe such as care and housing and that European regional funds have a key role to play here. EU-funded research will also continue offering relevant opportunities if we make it happen and concrete for citizens. These solutions must find their place in political groups' programmes, concluded van Nistelrooij.

Britta Thomsen, MEP (S&D, DK) added that older persons represent a great share of European voters. The challenges they face must be taken into account, such as ICT literacy, poverty in old age – particularly among older women, and carers' burden.

Ioan Enciu MEP (S&D, RO) added that Romania faces similar demographic challenges, notably regarding the labour market, and consequently action is much needed there as well. Josef Weidenholzer MEP (S&D, AT) also welcomed AGE Manifesto and its recommendations.

The hearings and nominations of European Commissioners will start right after the European Parliament elections, recalled Ralf Jacob, Head of Unit, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. He explained that AGE manifesto could be used to draft questions for the hearings of new Commissioners to ensure that they are well aware of older persons' priorities. He underlined the necessity to focus on the potential of older people rather than on limitations and frailty. The European Union has limited competences in the field of ageing but does already a lot on gender equality, older workers' participation in labour markets, recommendations on pension reforms, quality access to healthcare and long-term care and will focus on rehabilitation and empowerment in the coming years. The European Commission also participates in the discussions around the human rights of older persons and will contribute to the assessment of the best tools to guarantee them. Evaluation of good practices is however much needed, underlined Jacob, as being the only way to ensure efficient allocation of scarce resources.

AGE recommendations have been also welcomed by representatives from CEMR-CCRE, EPSU, Alzheimer Europe and EAPN, who stressed on the importance to develop



research, improve labour markets and conditions and work towards a minimum income in Europe.

Last but not least, AGE paid tribute to the Intergroup on ageing and solidarity between generations and strong support provided by its co-chairs and welcomed Claude Moraes recommendation that this key forum should be re-established after the EP elections to provide a platform where MEPs can discuss older persons' expectations and raise awareness about their needs in the EP work.

Both the chair Claude Moraes and Marjan Sedmak thanked the participants and called on their support to promote AGE manifesto among other MEPs and their national political parties.

