**Follow-up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution on an old continent growing older - possibilities and challenges related to ageing policy post 2020**

1. **Rapporteur:** Beata Szydło (ECR / PL)
2. **Reference number**: 2020/2008 (INI) / A9-0194/2021 / P9\_TA-PROV(2021)0347
3. **Date of adoption of the resolution:** 7 July 2021
4. **Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL)
5. **Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

The resolution sets out a comprehensive and ambitious agenda for addressing a wide range of impacts of the ageing population in Europe.

Broadly in line with the Commission’s approach, the resolution supports relevant EU initiatives such as the Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025, the European Pillar of Social Rights, Work-life Balance Directive, Long-term Vision for Rural Areas, as well as targeted use of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Just Transition Fund, the NextGenerationEU and the REACT-EU.

Specific calls put forward in the resolution and discussed in the below responses cover broad issues such as:

* combating discrimination against older people, including gender employment and pension gaps, stimulating age-friendly environments and preventing violence;
* health and long-term care for older people, including a care deal for Europe, Health in All Policies approach and the use of assistive digital technologies;
* social protection and social inclusion, focusing on reducing the risk of poverty of older people;
* active ageing, including up-skilling and re-skilling of older people, work-life balance and support to carers, tackling old-age poverty and boosting silver economy;
* issues such as combatting violence against women, revising EU statistical framework, strengthening the representation of older people, promoting inclusive labour markets and access to work for older people, as well as considering the potential and needs of older people in rural areas and those working in agriculture.
1. **Response to requests and overview of action taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:**

Paragraph 2: **Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen their efforts to combat all forms of discrimination against older people, particularly against women** [...] **calls on the Commission to follow up on the implementation report of Directive 2000/78/EC after 20 years with a view to strengthening the framework for age discrimination in employment and occupation;**

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (2012/C 326/02) prohibits discrimination based on any ground, including sex and age. The situation of older persons and the promotion and protection of their human rights remain high on the agenda of the European Union and its Member States. The European Pillar of Social Rights states that regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, **age** or sexual orientation, everyone has the right to equal treatment and opportunities regarding employment, social protection, education, and access to goods and services available to the public. The European Commission, for the first time in its history, has a Commissioner for Equality, and a Vice-president for democracy and demography. The European Commission is engaged in achieving a Union of equality. Dedicated strategies[[1]](#footnote-1) set out mechanisms and actions to create the conditions for everyone to live and thrive regardless of differences based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The strategies promote an intersectional perspective, addressing specific barriers faced at the intersection of identities, socioeconomic situation or other vulnerabilities.

In addition to targeted actions, enhanced mainstreaming of equality and accessibility in all relevant EU policies, legislation and funding programmes is key in achieving a Union of Equality.

In this context, the Commission has set up an internal equality task force to help ensuring mainstreaming of equality in relevant legislation and policies.

In March this year, the Commission published the Report on the application of Council Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin (‘the Racial Equality Directive’) and of Council Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation (‘the Employment Equality Directive’). The report contains in chapter 4.5 specific observations on the implementation of equal treatment in employment and occupation regarding age. The conclusion contains a list of follow-up actions to address the challenges identified the report.

Paragraph 7**: Calls on the Commission and the Council to establish a Year of Intergenerational Solidarity and Active Ageing complementing and building on the aims and spirit of the European Day of Solidarity between Generations and the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations […]**

**Calls on the Commission and the Council to swiftly implement the Council conclusions on the human rights, participation and well-being of older persons in the era of digitalisation, including the creation of a ‘platform for participation and volunteering after working life’ and the promotion of intergenerational exchanges and ties;**

The Commission agrees that providing more visibility to the topic of ageing is important. This is why the Commission has made ageing a policy priority, by publishing a report on the impacts of demographic change and launching the Green paper on ageing.

However, another year dedicated to ageing may have a limited impact on the situation of older people in the EU compared to other measures under way. The Commission has committed to adopt a number of policy initiatives in the context of the European Pillar of Social Rights, many of which are very relevant for the quality of life of older people. These include a new European Care Strategy, a Council Recommendation on minimum income, an initiative on Individual Learning Accounts and EU report on access to essential services. Moreover, as the prevalence of disabilities increases with age, the implementation of the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 is of direct relevance to address the needs of an ageing population, notably by promoting accessibility and independent living.

In parallel, the Commission’s Green Paper on Ageing opened a broad consultation process on the opportunities and challenges of ageing, highlighting the importance of striking the right balance between sustainable solutions for our welfare systems and strengthening intergenerational solidarity.

In addition, the Commission’s Long-term Vision for Rural Areas addresses challenges for older people in rural areas, in particular.

Paragraph 9: **Welcomes the Commission’s Green Paper of 27 January 2021 entitled ‘Ageing: Fostering solidarity and responsibility between generations’ (COM(2021)0050); calls on the Commission to prepare an EU action plan on demographic change and solidarity between generations, taking into account the diversity and complexity of the situation in specific age groups as well as differences in the Member States;**

The Commission’s growth strategy, the European Green Deal, stresses the importance of a socially just transition, which takes into consideration demographic challenges and responds to them in a socially just manner. Demographic aspects are being further integrated in relevant EU policies. For these reasons, a specific EU action plan on demographic change is not being considered. The Commission is actively supporting the Member States in addressing the impacts of demographic change at national, regional and local level.

There is no one-size fits all solution to tackle the consequences of the ageing of Europe’s population. There is a need for a mix of tools and policies, adapted to the specific circumstances of the Member States, their regions and different areas that face specific opportunities and challenges.

The Green Paper on ageing launched a broad public debate on possible policy options to respond to the ageing trend in the EU. The results will be taken into account in reflections on next steps in addressing and anticipating demographic change.

Paragraph 13: **Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ratify and implement the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence;**

Tackling gender-based violence is high on this Commission’s agenda. The EU’s accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) remains a key priority. The EU signed the Istanbul Convention in June 2017, however, the process remains blocked by a minority of Member States

President von der Leyen has announced that the Commission will make a legislative proposal to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women and domestic violence. The initiative is included in Commission Work Programme as a key initiative for late 2021.

The legislative initiative will have the same objective as the Istanbul Convention: ensuring that EU Member States have effective measures in place (in areas of EU competence) to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. If the EU’s accession to the Istanbul Convention is finalised, the measures of the new legislative initiative will implement the Convention in the areas of the EU competence.

Paragraph 20: **Calls on the Commission to take an evidence- and human-rights-based approach to tackling demographic challenges in the EU, ensuring that all EU residents can fully realise their sexual and reproductive health and rights;**

The Commission is committed to an evidence-based approach also in tackling demographic challenges in the EU, in line with EU values including those of human rights and dignity (Article 2 of TEU). In 2020, the Commission published a report on the impact of demographic change (COM(2020) 241 final), that drew on evidence and comparable data provided by Eurostat in particular. The report paved the way for the Green paper on ageing, which opened a wide debate on ageing, taking into account both the challenges that come with an ageing society as well as the new opportunities. Both the report and the green paper address, among others, the challenge of meeting a growing demand for adequate and sustainable health and long-term care services, in view of the EU’s ageing population.

The Member States are responsible for the definition of their public health policy including sexual and reproductive health, and for organising and delivering health services and medical care. The Commission supports the Member States to ensure the resilience of their health systems, including services related to sexual and reproductive health, according to national laws. The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan[[2]](#footnote-2) adopted in March 2021 reaffirms the shared commitment to improve access to healthcare. The European Commission calls on Member States’ efforts to close country-specific gaps in access to healthcare and improve their health systems through the European Semester. The Member States can use European funds, including the Recovery and Resilience Facility and Cohesion Policy funds, to modernise their health systems and improve access to healthcare through addressing specific problems, which vary across and within countries.

The Commission also supports the Member States in implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals relevant to women’s health, such as on universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, family planning and education. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control supports Member States in promoting the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination. Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan (COM/2021/44 final) will further assist through a flagship action aiming to eliminate cervical cancer and other cancers caused by human papillomaviruses. The EU4Health programme’s work programme for 2021 includes two actions to support consistent and efficient roll-out of HPV vaccination, with a total budget EUR 5 million. The Commission will also put forward by 2022 a proposal to update the Council Recommendation on cancer screening addressing also cervical cancer. In addition, the recently launched Commission Knowledge Centre on Cancer will provide new guidelines and quality assurance schemes on cancer screening, diagnosis, treatment rehabilitation, follow-up and palliative care for cervical cancer. These will include voluntary accreditation and certification programmes for Cancer Centres and screening programmes.

Paragraph 22: **Calls on the Commission to put forward a care deal for Europe and a European carers’ programme aimed at making the transition towards a care economy that entails relevant investment and legislation at EU level, taking a comprehensive approach towards all care needs and services and setting quality guidelines for care throughout the life course, including for children, older persons and persons with long-term needs, with a view to identifying and recognising the various types of informal care-giving, and guaranteeing financial support for carers, appropriate periods of leave and affordable services, among other things;**

Paragraph 77: **Calls on the Commission to adopt an EU strategy on carers;**

The European Pillar of Social Rights includes, among others, principles concerning long-term care and health care. The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan presented by the Commission on 4 March 2021 will contribute to turning the principles of the Social Pillar into reality, as a joint effort of the EU institutions, national, regional and local authorities, social partners and civil society. The Action Plan announces a Commission initiative on Long-Term Care in 2022 that would set a framework for policy reforms to guide the development of sustainable long-term care that ensures better access to quality services for those in need. The 2021 Long-term care report[[3]](#footnote-3) and the input received through the public consultations for the Pillar Action Plan and the Green paper on ageing provide essential feedback. In parallel, the Commission will revise the Barcelona targets to increase participation in early childhood education and care, also with a view to strengthening female labour market participation by providing high-quality care for children. The President of the European Commission announced in the 2021 State of the European Union address[[4]](#footnote-4) the new European Care Strategy that will encompass these initiatives and support men and women in finding the best care and the best life balance for them.

In addition, theCouncil Recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee[[5]](#footnote-5) aims to ensure that children at risk of poverty or social exclusion enjoy equal opportunities and have free access to key services such as early childhood education and care, healthcare, a healthy meal during school-days and education, and also effective access to nutrition and housing.

Furthermore, the European Commission recently published the report ‘Early Childhood Education and Care: How to recruit, train and motivate well-qualified staff’, which explores ways to address staff shortages in this sector and improve career opportunities. It complements the EU Quality Framework for early childhood education and care.

Finally, under the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, the Commission will take dedicated action to further promote independent living and inclusion in the community (see reply to paragraph 60 below).

Paragraph 24: **Calls on the Commission and the Member States to pursue a Health in All Policies approach, assessing the health impact of policy choices in all relevant areas;**

The Commission implements a health approach in all policies. Assessing the health impact forms a key part of the Commission's better regulation agenda, which seeks to design and evaluate EU policies and laws so that they achieve their objectives in the most efficient and effective way. The Commission's impact assessment system follows an integrated approach that assesses the environmental, social and economic impacts of a range of policy options. Health is a key component of the social impacts being considered.

Paragraph 26: **Calls on the Commission and the Member States to further explore user-friendly, safe and accessible assistive digital technologies, telecare and telemedicine, especially in regions affected by demographic decline and remote regions;**

The Commission has been active in promoting person-centred care, digital skills for the health sector and active and healthy ageing. The 2018 Communication on enabling the digital transformation of health and care in the Digital Single Market (COM/2018/233 final), for example, tackles the issues of integrated care, person-centred care and ageing at home. European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing has facilitated exchanges across the EU to test scientific and medical innovations with the aim to scale them up at regional or national levels (see e.g. SWD/2018/437 final).

The Commission supports also the Active and Assisted Living Programme (AAL), which aims to create better living conditions for older adults with the help of technology, as well as to strengthen the international industrial opportunities in the area of information and communication technology (ICT). It carries out its mandate through funding cross-national projects (at least three countries involved) that involve small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), research bodies and end-user organisations (representing seniors). AAL projects are financed by the European Commission and the 26 countries that constitute the partner states of this joint initiative. Under Horizon Europe (2021-2027), a new partnership ’Transforming Health and Care Systems’will continue to support Active and Healthy Ageing research and innovation.

As part of the upcoming European Health Data Space legislative proposal that is planned to be adopted in 2022, the Commission will aim at facilitating the provision of digital health in the EU, covering health services and products, including tele-health, tele-monitoring and mobile health, namely by overcoming limitations and fragmentation due to divergent national measures.

Under the Web Accessibility Directive[[6]](#footnote-6), all public sector websites and mobile applications, including those for healthcare, have to be accessible for persons with disabilities. Essential for some, accessibility features can also be very useful for older digital users. The Commission will evaluate, in 2022, the application of the Web Accessibility Directive and assess whether the directive should be revised to address any gaps identified, such as scope, technological advances, and coherence with other relevant EU legislation. The European Accessibility Act[[7]](#footnote-7) will extend accessibility requirements to a range of products and services with practical effect from 2025.

Paragraph 37: **Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop recommendations on reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion in older age, focusing especially on the gender pension gap, older persons with disabilities, older migrants, older Roma, older persons belonging to ethnic, racial, linguistic or sexual minorities and other groups that are disproportionately affected by poverty and social exclusion**

Paragraph 48: **calls on the Commission to support the Member States in fighting poverty, which particularly affects single mothers and has been further increased by the crisis, leading to greater social exclusion;**

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan puts forward an integrated approach to address needs at all stages of life and target the root causes and manifestations of poverty and social exclusion. In line with the Treaties, the Member States are to play the key role. This integrated approach is underpinned by recent initiatives such as the Council Recommendation on access to social protection[[8]](#footnote-8) and the European Platform on Combating Homelessness[[9]](#footnote-9), as well as the upcoming ones: proposal for a Council Recommendation on minimum income, an initiative to enhance the use by Member States of distributional impact assessment in their reforms and investments, a Commission report on access to essential services, and a High-Level Expert Group to study the future of the welfare state. The Commission is also committed to address poverty and social exclusion of disadvantaged groups at every stage of life through a series of actions announced in dedicated strategies.[[10]](#footnote-10) For instance, the Commission will launch, in 2022, a study on social protection and services for persons with disabilities to examine good practices on disability benefits, old-age income, health insurance, cash and non-cash benefits as well as on extra-costs due to disability. Furthermore, several EU directives concur to combat gender gaps in the labour markets, including the gender pension gap: the directive on work-life balance, the proposed directives on minimum wages and on pay transparency.

When it comes to pensions and old age income, the 2021 Pension Adequacy Report, prepared jointly by the Commission and the Social Protection Committee identifies the most pressing challenges as regards pensions as well as opportunities to address them in each Member State. Furthermore, the Commission aims to map best practices in providing pension rights for care-related career breaks in occupational pension schemes and promote the exchange of practices among Member States, social partners and pension stakeholders.

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan sets three new measurable headline targets for 2030, in particular a new poverty target: the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion to be reduced by at least 15 million by 2030. At the Porto Social Summit in May 2021, the EU Heads of State and Government and the EU social partners committed to these headline targets that were welcomed by the European Council of 24-25 June2021. In the June 2021 EPSCO Council, the Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs committed to set national targets that will contribute to the common poverty target. The European Pillar of Social Rights has been embedded in the European Semester since 2017. A revised Social Scoreboard – now including indicators on people with disabilities and on housing - will reinforce the employment and social dimension of the Semester. The Pillar Action Plan set a complementary target to halve the gender employment gap in the EU by 2030.

The Council recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee, adopted unanimously on 14 June 2021, aims to ensure that all children at risk of poverty or social exclusion have access to services they need, including early childhood education and care, education and healthcare.

Paragraph 39: **calls for accessible and affordable digital skills programmes catered to the needs of older people; calls on the Commission to take specific actions targeting older people; calls, furthermore, on the Commission and the Member States to support upskilling and reskilling initiatives, in particular for vulnerable groups, in order to help people find a quality job and in order to meet the needs of the labour market;**

The European Commission puts an emphasis on adult learning, training and skills development as a means to put in practice the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights on education, training and life-long learning, to prepare people for the green and digital transition and to respond to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim is to ensure a skilled workforce and an inclusive society, which enables and empowers individuals to have an active role. As part of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan an ambitious target of 60% of all adults participating in training every year by 2030 has been set and was welcomed by the June 2021 European Council.

The European Skills Agenda sets the goal to build comprehensive, quality and inclusive adult learning systems, which reach out to all, including seniors and in particular those most in need of access to learning.

In most of today’s jobs, but also to participate in society, people including older people need digital skills. The European Social Pillar Action Plan sets out that by 2030, 80% of adults should have at least basic digital skills.

To respond to this challenge, the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 (DEAP)[[11]](#footnote-11) was updated. The development of digital skills and competences for the digital transformation among citizens of all ages and backgrounds are key priorities. Consequently, the European Digital Competence framework for citizens will be updated to include Artificial Intelligence and data-related skills.

When it comes to adults and elderly people, digital transformation is among the four priorities of the Partnerships for cooperation under the new Erasmus+ programme. The calls for Partnerships are open to education and training institutions at all levels, including adult learning with the objective to support developing cooperation that contribute to increasing the relevance of their activities, exchanging and developing new practices and methods, including in digital education. The Commission recognises the important role digital technologies can play in boosting upskilling, reskilling as well as the recognition of digital skills. Current work on developing a European Digital Skills Certificate will enhance the transparency and mutual recognition of digital skills certification by governments, stakeholders and employers across Europe. Moreover, higher education staff and VET (vocational education and training) learners will now be included in the up-scaled Digital Opportunity Traineeships, which aims to strengthen digital skills through cross-border traineeships.

Paragraph 53: **Calls on the Commission to support the Member States in the increasing use of the structural funds for investment in public childcare and care for older and dependent people;**

In line with the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan objective of increasing the provision of formal early childhood education and care by 2030, cohesion policy funds will support improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in early childhood education and care, including by developing infrastructure and equipment. For the programming period 2021-2027, providing quality care for older and dependent people continues to be a priority for ESF+ and ERDF, in the context of promoting the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care (deinstitutionalisation). The funds should be implemented in a way that promotes such transition. The goal is also supported by the enabling conditions for funding set out in the Common Provisions Regulation.

Paragraph 56: **Underlines that the emerging silver economy could turn into one of the main economic drivers, particularly in rural areas, and could provide opportunities for the health and long-term care sectors to offer high-quality care in a more efficient way; calls on the Commission and the Member States to take into account the potential of the silver economy in EU and national strategies and to promote it more vigorously, including in tourism and cultural exchanges geared towards older people;**

The silver-economy can provide new opportunities, for instance for the health and long-term care sectors. It can be a driver of innovation to help provide high-quality care services in a more efficient way. The silver economy can open up new job opportunities in sectors such as tourism, smart homes that support independent living, assistive technologies, and accessible products and services.

A Commission 2018 study looked into the opportunities of the silver economy, which is expected to grow by about 5% a year from EUR 3.7 trillion in 2015 to EUR 5.7 trillion in 2025. The silver-economy may help tackle challenges in the health and long-term care sectors, by contributing to improved quality of life, increased efficiency of health and long-term care, as well as market growth and expansion of the EU industry[[12]](#footnote-12).

Digital technologies can play an important role in delivering better quality of health and social care services to the ageing population across the EU, for example, with independent living or integrated care solutions, telemedicine, falls prevention, adherence to therapy solutions or the set-up of age- friendly environments[[13]](#footnote-13). The uptake of digital technologies such as telemedicine in health care may play a key role, in particular, in sparsely populated areas[[14]](#footnote-14) [[15]](#footnote-15).

Various EU-funded projects investigate the potential of the silver economy at the regional level, such as the ‘Europe enabling Smart Healthy Age-Friendly Environments’ project that supports seven regions in linking research, SMEs, public authorities and users to improve quality of life and inclusivity and access to health and social care services. Under Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 1: Health, Demographic change and wellbeing, the Commission has supported a large number of projects on ageing with the help of digital technologies.

The recently adopted Long Term Vision for the EU´s Rural Areas[[16]](#footnote-16) identifies demography as one of the most impactful drivers for the future of rural areas and puts forward initiatives contributing to their revitalisation.

Paragraph 59: **calls on the Commission to put forward an EU teleworking agenda with a view to developing a legislative framework laying down clear minimum standards and conditions for remote work across the EU;**

As indicated in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and in line with the recommendations laid down in the European Parliament’s Resolution of 21 January 2021, ‘[t]he Commission invites social partners to find commonly agreed solutions to address the challenges raised by telework, digitalisation and the right to disconnect. The Commission will assess existing practices and rules and will proactively support social partners in their endeavour, facilitating discussions and the identification of best practices’.

In addition, the Commission will continue to explore the context and implications of telework and its challenges and opportunities, and will facilitate debate and the exchange of experience with social partners, Member States and other relevant stakeholders, to inform its reflections on a potential EU initiative in this area.

Based on the evidence collected, the Commission may decide to proceed with a first-stage consultation of social partners under Article 154 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), in view of a possible initiative addressing the requests of the resolution.

Paragraph 60: **Calls on the Commission and the Member States to mainstream the rights of older persons with disabilities into all disability- and ageing-related policies and programmes, ensuring full compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;**

The Commission adopted the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 on 3 March 2021. The Strategy is aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and supports its implementation by the EU and by the Member States, in line with respective competencies. The Strategy promotes an intersectional perspective and acknowledges the need to pay particular attention to older persons with disabilities, for instance in the provision of social and health services, and in ensuring safety and protection.

The Strategy reaffirms that persons with disabilities, old and young, have an equal right to live independently and be included in the community, with choices equal to others about their place of residence and with whom and how they live.

To further support independent living and inclusion in the community, the Commission will by 2023 issue guidance recommending to the Member States improvements in this area, in the community, in order to enable persons with disabilities to live in accessible, supported housing in the community, or to continue living at home (including personal assistance schemes). Moreover, the Commission will present by 2024 a European Quality Framework for Social Services of Excellence for persons with disabilities, to improve service delivery for persons with disabilities and to enhance the attractiveness of jobs in this area including through upskilling and reskilling of service providers. In addition, the Commission calls on the Member States to promote and secure financing for accessible and disability-inclusive social housing, including for older persons with disabilities.

Paragraph 67: **Asks the Commission and the Member States to create effective programmes for combating violence against women that incorporate the age dimension in order to prevent the physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse that can be inflicted on older people, most of whom are women;**

The Citizen, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV) will build on the success of its predecessors Rights, Equality, and Citizenship (REC) and Europe for Citizens programmes. Under the REC programme, more than EUR 105 million were granted to projects combatting violence against women and children (Daphne).

The new CERV programme, including a substantial budget top-up, represents an unprecedented opportunity to strengthen support to civil society organizations in the European Union and to reach out to new organisations. The programme is a unique instrument accompanying the implementation of policies and priorities in the areas of Union values, equality and non-discrimination, anti-racism, democracy and rule of law, citizens’ engagement.

The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 sets out key actions and objectives to strive towards a Union of equality, including tackling gender-based violence. Funding civil society organisation working on the ground to tackle gender-based violence is a crucial element of these actions. The CERV programme will fund actions on areas such as prevention of gender-based violence, engagement of men and boys, as well as awareness raising and training of relevant professionals. Funding priorities integrate an intersectional approach, which also includes the age dimension in the context of prevention of violence against older women.

The current call for proposals to prevent and combat gender-based violence and violence against children closed on 15 June with an indicative budget of EUR 17.7 million. Funding priorities include early detection and prevention of gender-based violence and protection of victims, as well as preventing gender-based violence by engaging men and boys.

Paragraph 44: **Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the proper implementation of the Work-Life Balance Directive and to support regional and local initiatives and projects aimed at striking a better balance between work and private life for men and women;**

Paragraph 75: **calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote and support an inclusive labour market and societies that allow for equal participation and draw on the skills and talents of all**;

Paragraph 76: **calls on the Commission and the Member States to facilitate access to work, for those who wish to, for people aged 60 and over, in particular women, as this would increase their lifetime incomes, and to introduce part-time, low-risk professional activities for older people;**

The Commission promotes equality between men and women, including on the labour market. In particular, the Directive on work-life balance (EU/2019/1158) introduced specific measures to ensure a better balance between work and care responsibilities and should be fully implemented in all the Member States by summer 2022. The EU also supports gender equality by equal treatment legislation and by promoting gender-equal policies as presented in the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (COM/2020/152 final).

The EU also supports pensions reforms in the Member States with studies, common scenarios, peer reviews and in the European Semester policy review. Common reform trends include for example raising statutory and effective retirement ages, encouraging longer working lives for all, and allowing for combined pension and part-time work. EU funds are available to support these policy objectives; in particular, the ESF+ supports training, mobility and work experiences for older persons.

Paragraph 78: **calls on the Commission to devise and adopt an EU charter for the rights of older people on the basis of Article 25 of the Charter [of fundamental rights];**

The Commission is committed to ensuring the respect of Article 25 of the Charter, within the remit of its competences. At the same time, the Commission would like to point out that Article 6(1) of the Treaty of the European Union states that, “[t]he provisions of the Charter shall not extend in any way the competences of the Union as defined in the Treaties.” In this context, the Charter cannot serve as a legal basis for further EU rules (primary or secondary law) and the Commission has no competence to lay down general fundamental rights obligations.

Paragraph 84: **Recognises the potential of older people, including farmers, to become the driving force of a vibrant silver economy in rural areas based on social innovation, inclusive rural communities and a healthier living environment; calls on the Commission to carefully study this potential when building its long-term vision for rural areas and active ageing;**

Ageing of the rural population is of concern. The common agricultural policy addresses generational renewal of farmers in particular. Similarly, the Long Term Vision for Rural Areas identifies demography as one of the most impactful drivers for the future of rural areas and puts forward initiatives contributing to their revitalisation. It looks at rural communities as a whole, without a particular emphasis on older generations, which is specifically addressed in the Commission’s Green Paper on ageing.

1. The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, the EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025, the EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020-2030, the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy, and the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](https://op.europa.eu/webpub/empl/european-pillar-of-social-rights/en/) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [Publications catalogue - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (europa.eu)](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8396) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/soteu_2021_address_en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/14/access-to-key-services-for-children-in-need-council-agrees-european-child-guarantee/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of 26 October 2016 on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Directive (EU) 2019/882 of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Council Recommendation of 8 November 2019 on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed (2019/C 387/01) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=89&furtherNews=yes&langId=en&newsId=10032> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025, COM(2020) 698 final; A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation, COM(2020) 620 final; Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-30, COM(2021) 101 final; A Union of equality: EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025, COM(2020) 565 final; Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, COM(2020) 758 final [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. COM (2020)624 final [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Impact of EU-funded Research and Innovation on ICT for Active and Healthy Ageing <http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/document.cfm?doc_id=50441> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
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