

Public Service Pensioners' Council

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To: PSPC Executive Committee and Secretaries of Affiliated Organisations

12 July 2019

Dear Colleague

Report of AGE Platform Europe General Assembly held in Brussels 12-14 June 2019

I attended the AGE Platform Europe General Assembly held in Brussels on 12/14 June 2019 on behalf of CSPA. As reported to the PSPC Executive Committee on 14 May, I undertook to report back to PSPC on the General Assembly even though we had agreed to effectively suspend the PSPC affiliation through not paying the 2019 fees pending clarification of the Brexit outcome.

AGE Platform Europe is officially recognised by the European Commission as a representative organisation reflecting the views and interests of older people. There are 106 different organisations affiliated, including from the UK: CSPA; NARPO; Age UK; Older Womens' Network; Wise Age; and the British Society of Gerontology. 65 delegates from 24 countries attended the Assembly.

The European Union fund 80% of the Age Platform annual budget (contributing €652,625) with the remaining 20% of the budget (€163,160) funded by the affiliation fees of member organisations.

At the opening of the Assembly, the Age President, Ebbe Johanson, from Denmark, reported that it had been a successful year for AGE Platform Europe with 57 full member organisations participating in its affairs and represented by the conference, with new organisations admitted into full membership at the Assembly from Finland; Switzerland; and The Netherlands. An application from a Turkish organisation for 'Observer' status was also approved.

The President added that there were turbulent times with the UK Brexit issue which was still undecided which was causing concern amongst the Executive Council about future UK participation in AGE Platform Europe, with financial implications with the loss of €12,000 annual fees from the UK affiliated organisations. A proposal at the Assembly to bridge this anticipated financial gap with a one-off 'additional contribution' of 10% of each affiliate's fee was voted down. Delegates were very supportive of UK members being able to stay within the AGE Platform as full members, but this would depend on whether the UK leaves with an agreed deal that would

General Secretary: David Luxton

ASSOCIATIONS REPRESENTED: Association of Retired and Former HMI Schools • Association of HM Inspectors of Schools (Scotland) • Association of Teachers and Lecturers • Association of School and College Leaders • Associate and Retired Members' Section of PCS union • British Broadcasting Corporation Pensioners Association • Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance • Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance (Scotland) • Educational Institute of Scotland • Forces Pension Society • Foreign and Commonwealth Office Association • MDP Retired Officers' Association • National Association of Head Teachers • National Association of Retired Firefighters • National Association of Retired Police Officers • National Federation of Occupational Pensioners • National Education Union • Prospect • Retired Police Officers' Association (Scotland) • Retired Teachers' Association (Northern Ireland) • Scottish Retired Teachers' Association • UNISON • University and College Union •

allow the UK to still have a relationship with the EU, given that the EU funds 80% of the AGE Platform budget. A further meeting of UK affiliates was subsequently held on 3 July at Age UK, at which a number of actions were agreed including a commitment to try and remain full members of AGE Platform Europe during any transitional phase prior to the UK's eventual withdrawal from the EU. Clearly a decision to leave with No Deal would be incompatible with continued affiliation given the EU funding contribution to AGE Platform Europe.

Objectives of Age Platform

The key objectives of AGE Platform were set out by the Secretary-General, Anne-Sophie Parent, as:-

- Ensuring equality and non-discrimination based on age within Articles 10, 11 and 19 of the EU Declaration;
- Monitor and influence social EU policies;
- Improve awareness amongst the EU and international community on the laws protecting the rights and concerns of older people;
- Promoting a positive image of older people.

A very full report was given of the wide range of projects undertaken by AGE Platform, and the work programme for 2020. The main activities of the Organisation were summarised as:-

- Monitoring and influencing EU and Member State policies in respect of elderly people;
- Raising awareness in the EU and United Nations on actions to combat ageism;
- Support policies to promote a dignified, active, and socially-included life for older people;
- Build capacity of affiliated member organisations to campaign on age related issues;
- Co-operation with other influencing bodies;
- Co-ordination of the large network of affiliated organisations within Age Platform Europe.

It was reported that AGE Platform was having increasing influence within the European Parliament on age discrimination and improving the affiliated members' capacity to influence the development of the EU Non-Discrimination/ Equality Laws and Social Economic Policy. AGE Platform links in with the next EU research programme from 2021 'Horizon 2021' and also commissions its own research programmes in pursuance of the broader objectives on behalf of elderly people.

European Elections May 2019

AGE Platform were very active in the run up to the European Elections held at the end of May, and had published its own 'AGE Manifesto' emphasising the negative impact of ageism on the enjoyment of human rights in old age and the double discrimination faced by older women due to age and gender. The organisation had direct meetings with the larger political parties represented in Brussels, as well as an online campaigning presence.

It was stated by the Vice-President, Mattison Regine, that although there were now more euro-sceptic MEPs in the European Parliament, Europeans were becoming more engaged and concerned about delivery social and environmental justice, and it was important to continue engagements to influence the direction of the EU social agenda. There was a new opportunity

with the newly elected parliament and the election of a new EU President to replace Claude Juncker whose 5 year term has come to an end. The priority of Age Platform was to push for implementation for the 'Pillar of Social Rights' and the work of the intergroup in active ageing.

Age Barometer 2019

As reported in **EC 155/19**, a new initiative had been launched by AGE Platform 'Age Barometer 2019' to map activities and priorities across member states and identify the links between them. The six key strands of the 2019 Age Barometer relate to:-

- Gender equality;
- Support to find employment in later life;
- Age friendly workplaces;
- Work/life balances;
- Fight against poverty, social exclusion and loneliness;
- Ensure adequate income for elderly people.

The Barometer would be updated for 2020 and there would be a questionnaire issued to all member organisations which will help provide the basis for comparisons for member states and the progress being made to achieve the objectives.

Tackling Ageism and Perceptions of Elderly People

There was an interesting presentation from one of the Spanish affiliates (Council of Older People of Bizkaia, Spain) about tackling and challenging negative perceptions and stereotypes of elderly people. The Organisation had set up a monitoring unit to review press reports and photo images of elderly people to challenge the negative perceptions of elderly people, often portrayed as frail and disabled and not reflecting the majority of elderly people having active lives and being socially engaged with their communities. In a three month period, 183 news items were analysed and most were identified as discriminatory against older people and re-enforcing negative stereotypes. The organisation also ran a photographic competition amongst its members to show positive images of older people. The campaigning had been very successful and helped to directly tackle the perceptions that can lead to discrimination against elderly people.

Conclusion

The three day conference had a wide range of interesting presentations and speakers with a great deal of content relevant to PSPC's wider campaigning issues. AGE Platform Europe is clearly an effective campaigning body and hopefully the UK affiliates will be able to continue our affiliation as full members if that can be facilitated with the eventual outcome to Brexit.

The Assembly concluded with endorsement of a Final Declaration which is attached.

Further information on AGE Platform Europe can be seen on their website: www.age-platform.eu

Yours sincerely

DAVID LUXTON
PSPC General Secretary



Life is intergenerational by nature and so should EU action!

AGE Platform Europe General Assembly 2019

Final Declaration

The European Parliament elections last May showed how deeply divided European citizens are. Public opinion is polarised on critical issues such as representative democracy, living-together and solidarity, migration and climate change. Young and old largely agree on the areas that governments should prioritise: fighting against poverty and unemployment, ensuring adequate income and support for all, guaranteeing access to education for every child and life-long learning opportunities regardless of age, introducing fair taxation, and ensuring a sustainable ecological transition. We stand side by side with young people expressing our mutual concern for the planet and fight for a sustainable future.

Representing 106 organisations of and/or working for older people as delegates of **AGE Platform Europe's members** from 24 countries gathered at the annual **General Assembly on 12 June 2019**, we wish to engage with our political and institutional actors to find solutions and address these major challenges, respecting the rights of **ALL** generations to fully contribute to and benefit from a more sustainable, equal and inclusive EU.

A new intergenerational contract is needed to sustainably support equality and social justice for younger and older generations

A change of mindset is needed if we want to achieve a sustainable, equal and inclusive society. Especially in times of austerity, pervasive ageism justifies an 'age-based rationing' in the provision of public services, ignoring the impact that such cuts have on other generations and threatening the capacity of all to live in dignity. Such views turn age groups against each other and hinder the advent of a social contract that would address all common challenges in a fairer and more sustainable way.

Our socio-economic status, education, gender, household circumstances, physical and cognitive abilities, ethnicity, sexuality and the environment in which we live in impact us all throughout our lives. These structural inequalities concern us all. Children living in poverty will often face obstacles to fulfil their potential as adults. Unequal access to education, employment or health care at earlier stages will impact the quality of life in older age. The lack of quality affordable eldercare services will prevent younger relatives with care responsibilities from contributing fully to the labour market and increases gender inequalities in employment. This will eventually increase the precariousness of women in older age, who continue being the main care providers.



We believe that Europe can successfully tackle all these challenges if we design together a society for all ages. By enabling cooperation across generations, Europe will preserve its most precious natural resource: its human capital. A comprehensive life-course approach that supports solidarity within and between age groups will not only benefit individuals but society as a whole.

Act against ageism for the benefit of young and old

We believe more than ever that action is needed to eradicate the ageism that pervades our societies, even fifty years after the term was first coined by Robert Butler M.D. Ageism continues to divide our societies into age groups perceived as having de facto conflicting interests. Even policies and laws enshrine age-specific approaches, thereby ignoring that life is intergenerational by nature. Whilst it is the opposite that is needed.

Empowering people at every stage of life and facilitating exchanges within and among age groups breaks down stereotypes and strengthens cohesion. Age equality and intergenerational fairness will eventually make our societies more cohesive and sustainable. Policy makers at all levels have responsibility to reduce ageism and promote intergenerational solidarity. These two objectives must be addressed in the current debate among the European institutions and national governments on EU priorities 2019-2024.

To this end, AGE Platform Europe members welcome the 10 commitments of the EU Heads of State and Government in the [Sibiu Declaration](#) in particular *to protect our way of life, democracy and the rule of law and to uphold the principle of fairness*. Building on this broad pledge, we call on our governments, the newly elected European Parliament and soon-to-be nominated European Commissioners to do their utmost to build a collective project for EU integration and identity, based on shared values that bind EU citizens: social progress, inclusion and solidarity across generations and countries.
