

Questions for the Hearings of candidate Commissioners in the European Parliament, September 2014

Candidate Commissioner for Development

The global population is ageing rapidly as a result of advances in healthcare, nutrition, sanitation, education and economic prosperity, which have led to lower infant mortality, declining fertility rates, and people living longer lives. Developing countries account for the majority of the world's older people and the population is ageing in these countries at unprecedented rates. Ageing can be seen as a triumph of development efforts, to which the EU as the world's biggest donor makes a significant contribution.

Population ageing is often solely considered to be a trend in OECD countries, but in fact the pace of ageing is fastest in low and middle income countries. For example, in Bangladesh between 2005 and 2010 the reduction of poverty is four times lower in households headed by persons over 60 than in those households headed by persons in their 30s¹. This suggests that the development interventions are currently inefficient in reaching the older population. At the same time, the number of older persons in Bangladesh will triple in less than 40 years, to 22% of the total population². It is clear that any poverty reduction strategy excluding ageing and older people will be increasingly inadequate.

EU development cooperation is focused on the primary and overarching objective of poverty eradication in the context of sustainable development, including pursuit of the MDGs³. However, older people are invisible in EU development policy, which is not responding effectively to global ageing. The EU must keep pace with the world's rapid demographic change and be inclusive of people of all ages throughout its development policy and programmes thus ensuring the well-being of all people now and in the future. This should include promoting universal access to public and social services and strengthening social protection floors as endorsed by 150 countries which approved the Recommendation 202 for social protection floors in 2012.

Question 1: In what ways will you ensure that EU development policies and programmes respond to the opportunities and challenges of global demographic change and integrate issues of ageing and the rights of older women and men?

Question 2: How will you ensure that population ageing and older people's rights are fully taken into account in the development of a post-2015 framework for sustainable development?

¹ Old Age Social Protection Options for Bangladesh, 2013: HelpAge International and Bureau of Economic Research Dhaka University: London 2013

² Ageing in the 21st century: a celebration and challenge, Appendix 1 page 168: UNFPA and HelpAge International: London 2013

³ http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/development-policies/european-consensus/index_en.htm

Candidate Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response

The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid states that “In responding to humanitarian need particular vulnerabilities must be taken into account. In this context, the EU will pay special attention to women, children, the elderly, sick and disabled people, and to addressing their specific needs.”⁴

The Consensus Action Plan contains a set of actions contributing to the implementation of quality aid approaches, aiming to more effectively identify and meet humanitarian needs, with an increased focus on specific vulnerabilities. The specific vulnerabilities of older people, however, are largely invisible in the Action Plan, its Mid-term Review in 2010 and the annual reports on the implementation of the Consensus.

Question: **How will you ensure that the specific vulnerabilities of older people in emergencies are addressed in the future European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid implementation mechanism to ensure a high quality and effective response that fulfils the EU commitment to impartial assistance delivery?**

Candidate for High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Negative ageist attitudes towards old age and older people are deeply ingrained in many societies and, unlike other forms of prejudice and discriminatory behaviour, are rarely acknowledged or challenged. The existing international human rights system does not adequately protect the rights of older people. Only one of the existing human rights instruments explicitly prohibits age discrimination. This has resulted in a failure in many countries to address the multiple forms of discrimination older people face. Specific provisions regarding issues like elder abuse, long term and palliative care, are also absent from existing human rights standards.

The EU's external action does not adequately address the rights of older people. The EU's Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy⁵ prioritises a range of human rights and types of discrimination, but excludes discrimination on the basis of old age and the promotion and protection of older people's rights. At the international level, the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing is responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of the rights of older people. It is also now exploring the main elements of a new legal instrument, or convention, on the rights of older people. The EU and its Member States are playing an active role in this process.

Question 1: **How will you work in collaboration with other EU institutions, and within the European Commission, to support the EU's full and constructive engagement in the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing?**

Question 2: **As the world's population continues to age rapidly, how will you ensure the EU actively promotes and strengthens the rights of older persons as part of its external action with non-EU countries?**

⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:025:0001:0012:EN:PDF>

⁵ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/131181.pdf

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