

Information on the proposed EU Covenant on Demographic Change

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I. How can age-friendly environments help meet Europe's demographic challenge

According to WHO, the physical and social environments are key determinants of whether people can remain healthy, independent and autonomous long into their old age. Promoting age-friendly environments (AFE) is one of the most effective approaches for responding to demographic ageing and increasing the HLY indicator. AFE empower older people to age in better physical and mental health, promote their social inclusion and active participation and help them maintain their autonomy and a good quality of life in their old age. AFE enable older workers to remain at work for longer, lower the pressure on traditional care and assistance and boost the economy through demand for innovative solutions.

II. Local and regional authorities struggle to adapt to Europe's ageing population

Many solutions supporting active and healthy ageing have been developed as pilots across the EU, but they remain isolated and do not get scaled up, not even in their own country. This means that their impact on addressing Europe demographic challenge is limited. Except in a very few countries that have a national programme on ageing, the various governance levels that need to work together to support age-friendly environments do not coordinate their action and there is no structure at EU level to coordinate local/regional/national actors willing to support AFE.

III. The added value of the proposed Covenant on Demographic Change

There is at present no EU network in existence which enables all stakeholders interested in promoting and supporting age-friendly environments (AFE) to link up, benefit from each other's experience and work together on shaping the EU agenda on active and healthy ageing. For this reason an increasing large group of stakeholders have joined forces to campaign for the launch of an EU Covenant on Demographic Change that will seek to create the necessary political and technical framework to bring together local and regional authorities – and other stakeholders - across the EU who want to find smart and innovative evidence based solutions and to facilitate the creation of a EU repository to support active and healthy ageing and develop age-friendly environments.

The proposed Covenant constitutes a unique initiative that will help mobilise a wide range of local and regional authorities and relevant stakeholders across the EU and will facilitate the creation of a large scale movement to adapt our environments and communities to the need of our ageing population and demographic changes. The Covenant will support longer healthy and active life years by pooling and sharing the knowledge and expertise of WHO on AFE, and by facilitating access of local/regional actors to the outcomes of the EIP-AHA, EU work on Design-for-All and interoperability standards, relevant EU projects, the upcoming Knowledge for Innovation Community for healthy living and active ageing.

The planned Covenant is therefore expected to play an important role in reducing geographical inequalities in Europe, which is also indispensable for reaching the EIP AHA headline target and for helping local and regional authorities meet their demographic challenge in innovative and sustainable ways. Given the huge potential of ICT and social innovation in support to age-friendly environments, mobilizing local and regional actors who can pick up such solutions and deploy them

across the EU will support healthy competition and a higher competitiveness among “silver economy” industries.

To join the proposed Covenant, local and regional authorities across the EU will endorse principles and guidelines - jointly developed by a group of partners (WHO, AGE Platform Europe, CEMR, Eurocities, Eurohealthnet) based on policy frameworks and guidance on age-friendly cities and communities - and adapted to the EU context. They will also have the opportunity to get actively involved in the EIP on Active and Healthy Ageing (under Action D4) and other relevant EU initiatives towards a more age-friendly EU.

IV. Who supports the Covenant

The proposed Covenant has received the support of the Committee of the Regions in their [“Opinion on Active Ageing: Innovation, Smart Health and Better Lives¹”](#) requested by the Danish EU Presidency and of a large network of stakeholders (Action D4 stakeholders + AGE partners and members who represent more than 30 millions older people across the EU-27). The campaign supporters are listed in Annex.

V. The role of the European Commission

For the last two years, AGE, WHO, CEMR and Eurocities have met with SG EMPL, DG SANCO, DG CONNECT, DG JUST and DG MOVE and discussed this proposal. AGE thinks that such Covenant can only be launched by the European Commission and funded by the EU as is the case of the existing Covenant on energy.

The [Covenant of Mayors](#) on local sustainable energy is a good example of a European tool/framework for reaching one of Europe 2020’s targets. Concretely, it sets out practical ways in which local and regional authorities can reach, and in many cases, go beyond, the set out target. It also shows the commitment of local and regional authorities and willingness to work and achieve such targets. The main advantage of such a Covenant is that it shows the commitment and practical implementation of specific goals by local and regional authorities: both at political and technical level.

We are convinced that such framework will enable local and regional authorities to contribute more actively and directly to the achievement of Europe 2020 objectives with regard to demographic changes ageing.

Local or even national authorities do not have the capacity to link up with a wide range of other local/regional/national actors and to build an EU-wide evidence based repository for age-friendly innovation. Only the EU can do that.