



**Smart  
Against  
Ageism**

# **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS**



**Co-funded by  
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## Project website

[saa-game.eu](http://saa-game.eu)

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# The Smart Against Ageism (SAA) project

The Erasmus+ project 'Smart against Ageism' (January 2022 – June 2024) aims to raise awareness about age discrimination. The consortium of seven partner organisations from six European countries provides the public with educational tools for improving attitudes towards older people, such as the SAA game, an educational game that introduces the users to the perspectives of older people concerned by or at risk of discrimination and segregation.

## Recommendations for policymakers

The recommendations for policymakers aim at inspiring the reader and providing a practical approach towards fighting against ageism. They consist of low-threshold and universal information for tackling ageism at a structural level. Good practices and recommendations collected from desk research in the partners' countries and from the pieces of experiences throughout the project are at the core of these recommendations.





### We aim to:

-  Contribute to better social inclusion of older adults.
-  Develop empathy, tolerance of diversity and civil society skills in societies.
-  Encourage people to reflect on their own negative biases towards old age.
-  Protect older people from condescending attitudes and practices.



# Smart Against Ageism

### We achieve that by providing:

-  A compendium based on personal experiences of being a target of age discrimination as well as strategies to cope with the situation.
-  The SAA interactive learning platform with the learning game at its core and further material for learners, adult educators, policymakers in authorities and associations, and the broad public.
-  A toolkit for trainers with all the necessary material to implement the game in workshops also enabling members of older adults' lobby groups to offer training
-  Recommendations for policymakers, lobby groups and associations to tackle the problems of ageism.

All educational materials and news about the project can be found at: [www.saa-game.eu](http://www.saa-game.eu)



# Let's talk about ageism!

“”

*“Ageism refers to stereotyping (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) against others or oneself because of age” (WHO, Global Report on Ageism, 2021).*

“”

*“Nobody asks us if we feel discriminated or not. There is no public discussion” (Woman, 80+).*

Ageism can be found in various everyday situations – at the doctor’s, at work, at the supermarket, etc. It can be structural, interpersonal or self-directed. The combination of political measures- (policies and laws), educational interventions and intergenerational contact interventions have been shown to work to reduce ageism. Together with awareness-raising- initiatives promoting active and healthy ageing and solidarity, it is possible to reduce the scale of ageism and improve the quality of life of people as they age.

“”

*“I work as an 80-something and had a temporary contract for two years. At the end of my contract, the employer wanted me to stay but could not offer me a permanent job because of my age. Their internal rules prohibited them from giving me a permanent job. Now I work for them as an independent consultant” (Woman, 80+).*

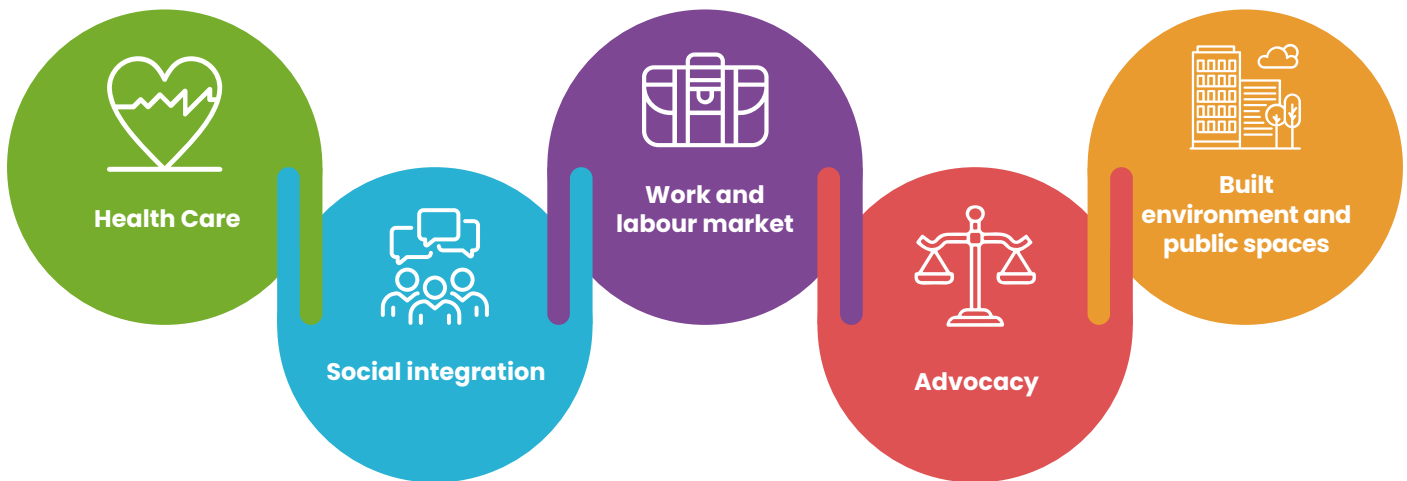
Within the SAA project, various types of research on the topic of ageism were carried out. Desk research and interviews with people being a target of age discrimination were conducted. They were held in the partners’ countries. They shared pieces of personal experiences regarding ageism. These are some of their statements:

“”

*“I have inhibitions about attending a dance class myself because I think I’m too old for it” (Woman, 70).*



Through their research activities, the SAA consortium found that people are mostly age discriminated against in the following five areas:



### Health care

Older people often feel discriminated against in the health system. They sometimes do not receive equal medical treatment options or unprejudiced medical assessment. Stereotypes often lead to limiting the autonomy and freedom of choice of older patients.

### Social interaction

Older people sometimes do not have the same opportunities in the social sphere. They are often excluded, neglected, condescended or patronised when it comes to different social situations (active citizenship, parties, events, relationships, etc.).

### Work and labour market

In the labour market, ageism contributes to treating older workers differently. Older people's performance, experience and knowledge are often assessed on stereotypical assumptions and older people often do not receive the same learning or professional development opportunities as younger people.

### Advocacy

The rights of older people are sometimes not protected or not respected enough. Cases of their discrimination are on occasion not supported enough, and their needs are not legally met in many sectors.

### Built environment and public spaces

There are many public buildings and facilities, streets, parks and other constructions in the living environment which are not accessible to older people. This has a negative impact on the independence, accessibility and inclusiveness of older people in society.

*These five areas are at the core of the SAA game and the Game Guide. If you want to gain more specific information about the areas of the game, you can access our Game-Guide and the game by clicking on the following link: <https://saa-game.eu/saa-game/>*

## Political tools against ageism

*Age discrimination is one of the most frequently experienced forms of discrimination in the European Union (EU) according to EU and United Nations (UN) reports<sup>1</sup>. Ageism has serious consequences both for older people and society at large. It can lead to stigma, segregation, and abuse. But it can be fought and some initiatives, policy measures and tools can make a difference.*

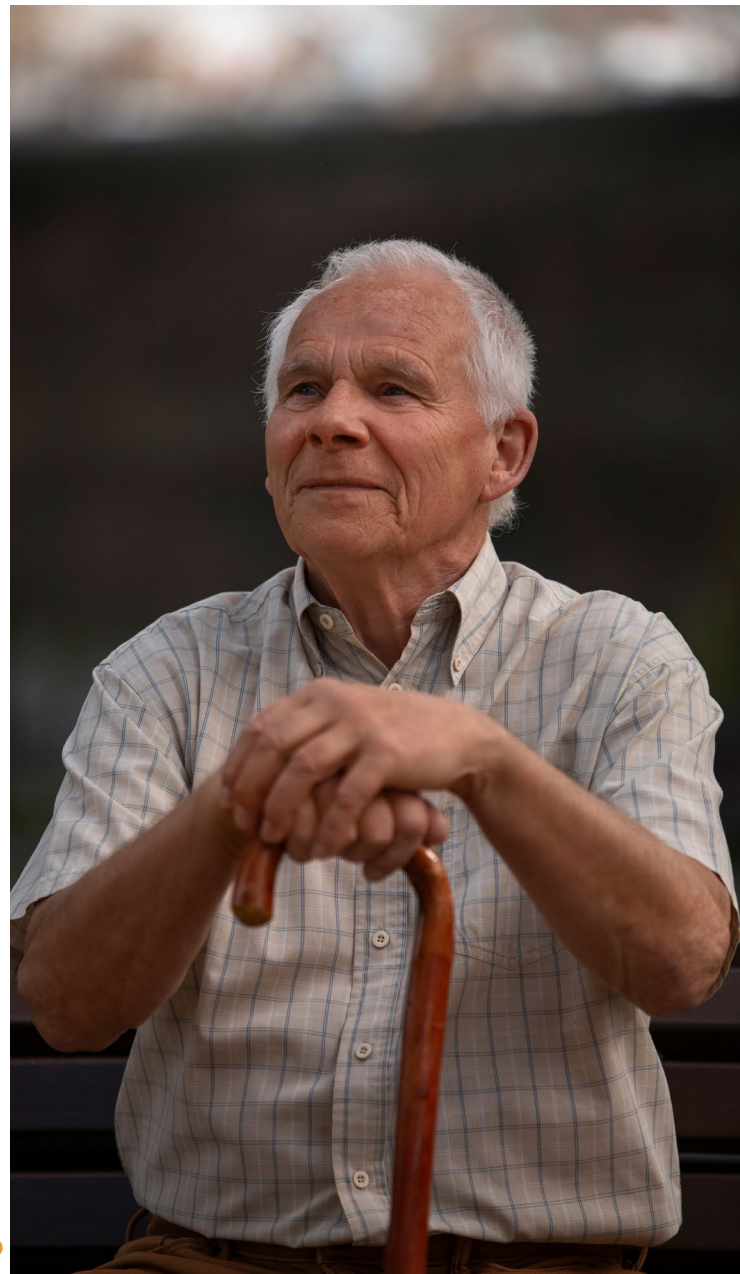
### Global Report on Ageism by the United Nations

In 2021, the United Nations published the [Global Report on Ageism](#) giving a description and evidence on ageism and ageist practices. It also outlines three strategies to address ageism (education, law and policies, and intergenerational activities) and three recommendations for different actors (governments, UN agencies, NGOs, private sector) on how to tackle it. The recommendations include building movements to change the narrative of age and ageing, investing in the three strategies, improving data and research on ageism. In addition to the report, there is also a Toolkit for raising awareness on the topic.

The comprehensive report gives an overview of the main challenges connected to ageism as well as the strategies for overcoming them.

### #AWorld4AllAges – Global Campaign to Combat Ageism by the World Health Organisation

In 2021, the World Health Organisation (WHO) launched a ten-year Global Campaign to Combat Ageism. So far, the campaign is focusing on visibility, building networks and coalitions and sharing strategies against ageism. The WHO has issued a Toolkit, a Guide to avoid ageism in communication as well as a social media package for the campaign. The WHO's guide challenges the assumptions and stereotypes of age through open conversation. In this way, the campaign is raising awareness on the topic of ageism starting an international open conversation.



<sup>1</sup> Based on the 2019 Eurobarometer Report on Discrimination in the EU15 and the first UN Global Report on ageism





Several EU policies are addressed towards older people in the fields of health, care, welfare, employment (Art. 10 and 19 of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#), the European Employment Directive, the European Pillar of Social Rights). The rights of older people are recognised at the EU level in Article 25 of the [EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#)

### EU Demography Toolbox

In 2023, the European Commission published a set of policy tools – the [EU Demography Toolbox](#), with guidelines on how to manage the social and economic impacts of these tendencies. Such a toolbox represents the first comprehensive step which includes action on four pillars aimed at parents, youth, older people and migration. In the third pillar, the older generations are supported by promoting their autonomy, participation and non-discrimination.

However, there are still a lot of fields where improvements are needed at the EU, national and/or local level. Integrative approach of structural, behavioural, legislative and other measures is needed to tackle age discrimination.

## What are the next steps?

### Age Equality strategy

At the European Union there is a need for an Age Equality Strategy. It would complement the existing EU acquis in line with the EU's priority to build a Union of Equality. It would also allow the EU to better address inequalities across the life-course and to combat intersectional forms of discrimination.

### United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older People

The world would benefit from a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older People (i.e. legally binding agreement of UN Member States). This will have a positive effect on older people's rights and empowerment, and contribute to their quality of life. The convention will also ensure older people's equality and human rights.



# Initiatives against ageism by organisations and older adults

The need for action identified in the EU and UN reports is reflected in the growing number of organisations and initiatives for and by older people. The mission of these organisations is to advocate for the equal rights of older people and for the respect of their quality of life.

Initiatives for older people are organised at local, national and international level. They raise awareness of age discrimination and the rights and needs of older adults. Some of the initiatives start as local ones but gain popularity at the national or even international level.

## AGE Platform Europe

[AGE Platform Europe](#) is an advocacy organisation in the European Union supporting the enjoyment of people's rights in older age and voicing the needs and concerns of older people. AGE works for a human rights-based approach to age-related policies at the European level, and offers a platform for exchange of information, practices and experiences to its members across the European Union.

Together with its members and other European NGOs and stakeholders, AGE roots for policies to embrace all human rights in old age, to respect the principles of equality and non-discrimination, to work with older people and to monitor, measure and assess the enjoyment of human rights over time across processes, outputs and inputs, to ensure that there is a gradual improvement rather than a deterioration of rights and that governments are held accountable when they do not comply with their obligations.

AGE Platform Europe bridges the gap between older people and policymakers by transforming the members' experiences and ideas into policy proposals, campaigns and projects.

## #STOPIDADISMO – a global initiative, Portugal

The [#STOPIDADISMO](#) campaign was launched in 2021, in eleven countries from South America and Europe: Portugal, Spain, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Cuba, Chile, Panama, El Salvador, Colombia and Venezuela. It is an international growing movement which started in Spain. Its aims include:

- Raising awareness of the problem of age discrimination in society
- Combating prejudice and discrimination
- Promoting inclusion and participation in society of older adults
- Proposing effective solutions.

#STOPIDADISMO's objectives also include prevention and intervention to combat ageism as well as education and intergenerational activities. The movement targets both younger and older people. One of the activities of the initiative is the definition of the term "ageism", its roots and impact.



### Initiative “Oll Inklusiv”, Germany

“Oll Inklusiv” is a non-profit initiative, located in Hamburg, Germany. It aims at including people over 60 years old in society through organising different events for them and creating a network for older adults. The participants can register through an application form, and this gives them access to a Chat tool via which they can communicate with each other.

Visiting clubs and concerts or creating art on the streets are just some of the activities. These activities are normally connected only with younger people, but through “Oll Inklusiv” older ones can also share the joy of doing them. The activities empower older adults and overcome the stereotypes connected with the image of older people.

The funding of the initiative relies on cooperation with foundations and sponsors. Volunteering is an important part of implementing the activities of the initiative.



### Did you know?

In Lithuania there are five national associations for older people which are represented in the Council for Senior Citizens at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. All these associations have branches in cities and regional towns.

Their work includes analysing and giving feedback on draft legislation and strategies for older people, lobbying, providing consultations and support as well as education and social engagement to its members, organising events and leisure activities.

Most of the activities implemented by these associations are projects funded by Government allocations in the strategic priority areas.

### What is needed?

#### Governmental support

Associations and initiatives for older people should receive support from the government to ensure sustainability. Organisations advocating for the rights of older people and providing equal opportunities for them need funding, tools and resources. These will grant that the associations provide quality services for older adults.



## Good practices in the health care

*Health care is an important sector where equal access and adequate services are needed for every citizen. Prevention, timely diagnosis and treatment are the three crucial factors for maintaining the quality of life and health of society.*

*In order to ensure that older adults live a life of dignity and joy, they should receive quality health care. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Ageist attitudes by doctors or because of administrative and logistical matters hamper older people from getting access to services and treatments. This is an issue which needs to be tackled on each level – structural (the system itself) and individual (the attitudes of the health care providers).*

### Patient Transport Service in Lithuania

In August 2023 the Ministry of Health started a [pilot project](#) addressing healthcare accessibility for patients who face difficulties getting to a medical facility on their own due to health or economic conditions, especially in remote and rural areas. Free-of-charge transport service is available for patients who require haemodialysis or transplantation, people aged 75 and over, and people with a 55% disability rating. The service is provided at the municipal level and is coordinated by the National Emergency Medical Service. The pilot project will continue until the end of July 2024, gradually involving all municipalities of the country.

The pilot municipalities are testing the service to determine the needs for patient transport and adequately prepare for the implementation of the service nationwide. Service coordinators in the pilot regions provide consultations both to patients and doctors on how to use the service.

The service is expected to solve the problem of healthcare accessibility in rural areas and result in better clinical outcomes as the care will extend from the patient's home to the doctor's office.

Halfway through the pilot project, the major issue identified so far is communication. Not all patients from the target groups know about the service yet and different communication channels are used to reach them.

### Info box

**Start year:** 2023

**State:** Testing period

**Scope:** National (Lithuania)

**Type of measure:** Political

**Implemented by:** Funded by the Ministry of Health and coordinated by the Ambulance Service in Lithuania

**Target groups:** Patients requiring hemodialysis or transplantation, people with mobility problems and special health conditions, people with dementia and people with low income.

**Resources needed:** Public funding and resources

**Issue addressed:** Accessibility of healthcare services in rural areas



## Access of older people to long-term care at home and in society – policies and reality, Bulgaria

The initiative “[Access of older people to long-term care at home and in society](#)” provides research and analysis of measures mentioned in political documents in Bulgaria for long-term care at home and in society.

The project provides recommendations for better policies for long-term care and encourages the inclusion of advocating associations. Moreover, the aim of the project is to raise awareness of this problem through a social media campaign.

The need for this project comes from the lack of guaranteed access to quality healthcare for older people as well as the lack of an integrated approach towards long-term care combining social and health services. Having the negative tendencies in Bulgaria, there is a need for fast-paced development of the health and social sectors.

Moreover, older people’s needs will be introduced in a clear way and specific strategies will be presented.

Through the project, institutions, policymakers, experts and local NGOs will receive a tool for improving the quality of long-term health care.



### Info box

**Start year:** 2021

**State:** In progress until 2024

**Scope:** National (Bulgaria)

**Type of measure:** Associational

**Implemented by:** Caritas Bulgaria with funding from the Active Citizens Fund

**Target groups:** Policymakers, institutions, NGOs

**Resources needed:** Any kind of funding, professionals in the research field

**Issue addressed:** Accessibility of long-term care



### What can be done?

The initiatives in Lithuania and Bulgaria address the problem of ageism in the health care. Defining the problem (Bulgaria) and finding effective ways of overcoming it (Lithuania) are steps forward towards providing quality care for older adults.

Governmental support is crucial for sustainability as some of the measures insist public assets to be used. Moreover, public funding for the initiatives themselves or for organisations implementing them, provides sustainability.

After all, the policies are at the core of ensuring the rights and sustainable initiatives for older people. The initiatives can be transferred to and implemented easily in all European countries if there is political will and societal empathy.



## Good practices in the social sphere

*The social aspect when it comes to age discrimination is very important as it is fundamental for tackling ageism in all spheres of life. It is important that society is empathic and understands the needs of older people. Older adults' personalities and emotions should be respected and their rights – valued. Moreover, they should be included in societal activities and their voices - be heard at the political level.*

*Ensuring an empathic society means that people in all areas: doctors, cashiers, policymakers, drivers, etc., are not judgemental, condescending or impatient towards older adults. The good part is that everybody can reflect on their own behaviour and improve their attitude towards older fellows.*

### #AgeingEqual campaign, European Union

The [#AgeingEqual](#) is the first European-wide campaign to raise awareness on the equal rights of older people and the negative consequences of age discrimination.

The campaign started on the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a year later it was shaped into an invitation to take action on ageism.

The aims of #AgeingEqual include the empowerment of older people and raising awareness on the harmful consequences of age discrimination.

The #AgeingEqual platform provides a blog with personal stories of ageing and older age. There are many contexts presented in the blog: understanding ageism, ageism and gender, ageism and sexuality, etc.



### Info box

**Start year:** 2018

**State:** Ongoing

**Scope:** European

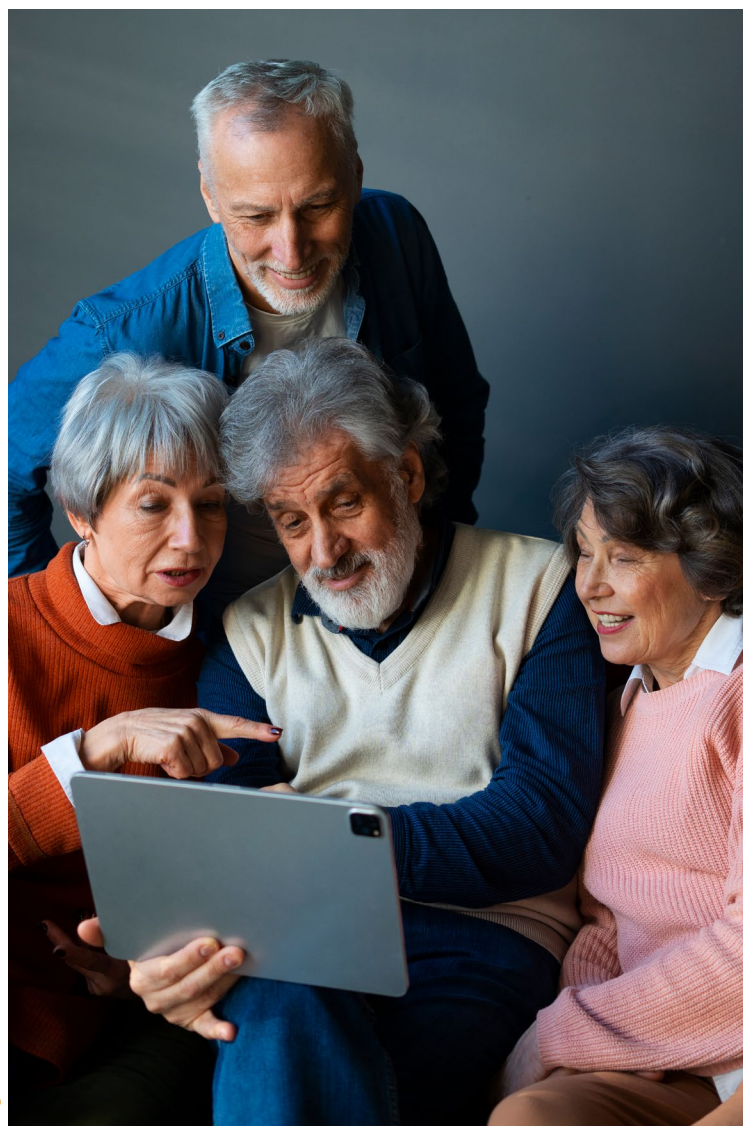
**Type of measure:** Associational

**Implemented by:** AGE Platform Europe

**Target groups:** Society

**Resources needed:** Good networking and communication channels

**Issue addressed:** Ageism in different areas



### Government Report on Older People and the “Images of Old Age” initiative, Germany

Since 1994 the German Federal Government appoints an independent commission of experts from various disciplines to prepare [Government reports on older people](#) for every legislative period. The reports provide information on the situation of older people, analysis and recommendations for action to support the political decision-making process.

The [First Government Report on the Elderly](#) identified the need for socio-political action in relation to demographic changes. This led to policies focusing more on ageing and social integration of older people.

[The Sixth Report on Old Age](#) examined the images of older people in society which were rather negative. As a result, the initiative [“Images of Old Age”](#) was launched by the Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. The aim of the campaign is to show the effects of specific (sometimes negative) images of old age and to promote diversity of the lives of older generations. The broad public is encouraged to examine their own images of old age and become more empathic and sensitive. All age groups can participate and thus get activated to reflect their own prejudices and stereotypes. It also focuses on the strengths of older people and aims at creating a new, positive image of age where older adults are active participants in society.

#### Info box

**Start year:** 1994 – first report; 2015 – start of “Images of Old Age” campaign

**State:** Ongoing

**Scope:** National (Germany)

**Type of measure:** political

**Implemented by:** Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany

**Target groups:** Society

**Resources needed:** Public funding and resources (low cost)

**Issue addressed:** Negative images of older people



#### What can be done?

Online and social network campaigns are a good way to use the new technologies in tackling ageism. Even though there is a need for good networking and dissemination mechanisms, the low costs make it easily transferrable in other European countries.

The campaigns give voices to older adults or provide society with the opportunity to reflect on their own images of age. The initiatives raise awareness on the social aspects of ageism in a powerful and usually artistic way.

Sustainability is ensured by network building and dissemination. The more the network is expanding, the greater the benefits will be.



## Good practices in the labour market

*Age discrimination often occurs in the labour market where due to prejudice older people are seen as less capable of doing the needed tasks. Employers do not take into consideration the skills and experience of their workers, focusing mostly on their age.*

*Furthermore, people capable of working tasks are declined labour contracts or are given lower salaries. Older people are not stimulated to develop their skills through trainings and courses and do not have the same opportunities for career advancement.*

*On the other hand, in some European countries the pensions are so low that older people are at the threshold of poverty. They cannot afford to live a quality life and are pressured to continue working.*

### Equal Treatment Act, Germany

The [Equal Treatment Act](#) (AGG) is a political measure regulating the equal treatment of people in Germany. It applies to various areas of life including the labour market prohibiting various forms of discrimination including ageism.

Key statements within the law include:

- Job advertisements must not be ageist
- Decisions regarding the job application process cannot be made on age basis
- Educational training and offers should have equal access for all ages
- A complaint unit must be established at all companies where employees can file a complaint about age discrimination.

### Info box

**Start year:** 2006

**State:** Implemented, ongoing

**Scope:** National (Germany)

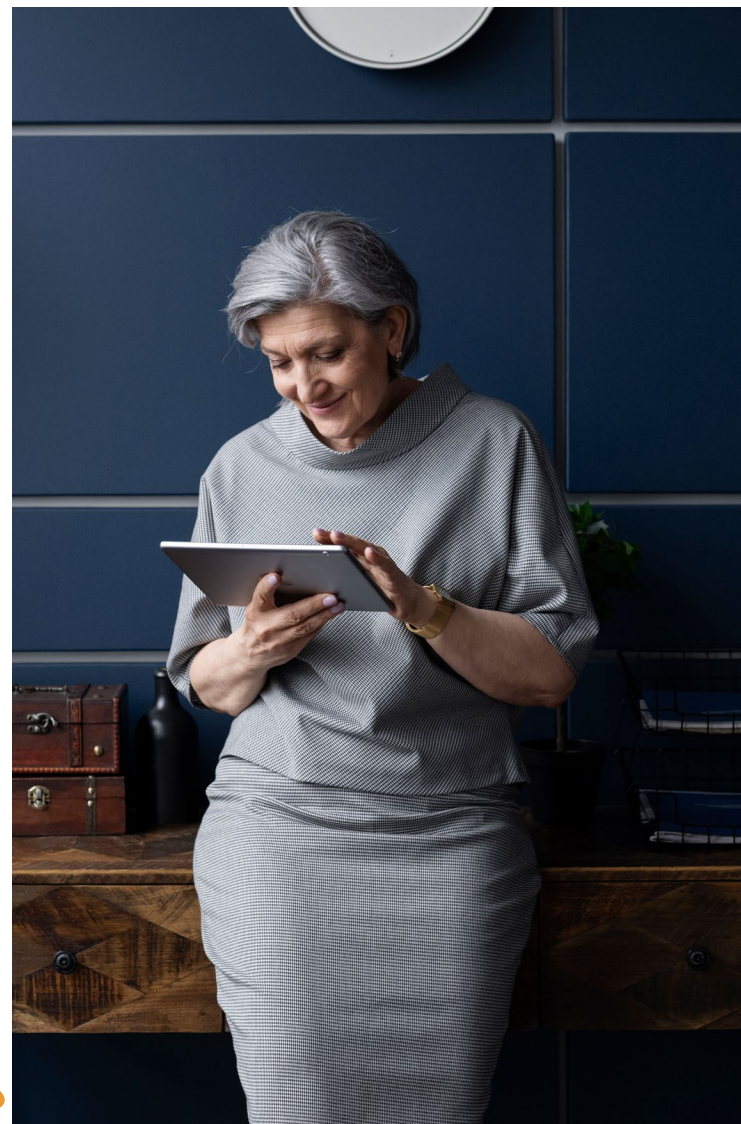
**Type of measure:** Political

**Implemented by:** Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency

**Target groups:** Society

**Resources needed:** Political decision

**Issue addressed:** Age discrimination at work





### Open Up Instead of Closing Down, Austria

The “[Open up instead of closing down](#)” campaign addresses the problem that companies often overlook older people when recruiting employees. Austrian Public Employment Service addresses this problem by providing incentives for companies to train and hire people over 50 years old.

It supports companies in the employment process, by providing funding and aid (integration grants and subsidy towards wage costs for the training period of older people). Moreover, it provides additional financial support for the training of low-qualified and older employees.

The idea of the campaign is to overcome ageism in employment and promote open recruitment based on skills rather than age. It encourages companies to address the broadest possible range of applicants when hiring new employees.

### Info box

**Start year:** 2006

**State:** Implemented, ongoing

**Scope:** National (Germany)

**Type of measure:** Political

**Implemented by:** Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency

**Target groups:** Society

**Resources needed:** Political decision

**Issue addressed:** Age discrimination at work



### What can be done?

Regulations against ageism in the labour market are an important measure to guarantee that older people have the same opportunities. To change the attitudes towards age in the job sector, associations, institutions and the government should promote positive measures, such as tackling long-term unemployment of older people, meeting both the search for profit by companies and the career advancement by the employees.

The measures can easily be transferred to all European countries that share common values and European legislation. Finding ways to provide incentives for the companies is a good approach which can be adapted to the resources available.

Sustainability is possible through political will to implement the law and gradual change of employers' attitudes towards age (through positive incentives).



## Good practices of advocacy campaigns

*Advocacy refers to actions that support, recommend, argue for a cause, defend, or plead on behalf of others.<sup>2</sup> Age discrimination occurs also in advocacy sector where, many times, older people's voices are not present. In some countries, there are no specific laws prohibiting ageism or acknowledging the rights of older people. What's more, there are no strategies for improving the lives of older people and overcoming ageism.*

*Empowering older adults provides opportunities for them to share and insist on their specific needs and rights. Ensuring their active participation in political life and fostering active citizenship equips individuals with the ability to effectively change the environments they inhabit.*

### **Older People's Council (Raad van Ouderen), the Netherlands**

The Older People's Council (Raad van Ouderen) advises the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport (VWS) and other stakeholders involved in the care of older people, highlighting important issues. The council comprises of 20 older individuals who are actively involved in both regional and national networks for older people. In this way, older adults are empowered to take part in topics affecting them.

The idea of the Council is to provide solicited or unsolicited pieces of advice on support and care for older people as well as to put relevant topics for older adults on the agenda. Another task of the Council is to develop the Pact of Older People's Care and, lastly, to establish connections with regional supporters.

So far, the Council issued recommendations to the ministry on 18 different issues, for instance: a campaign for the reevaluation of older adults, information about nursing home selection and a campaign about how to grow older.

### **Info box**

**Start year:** 2018

**State:** Ongoing

**Scope:** National (the Netherlands)

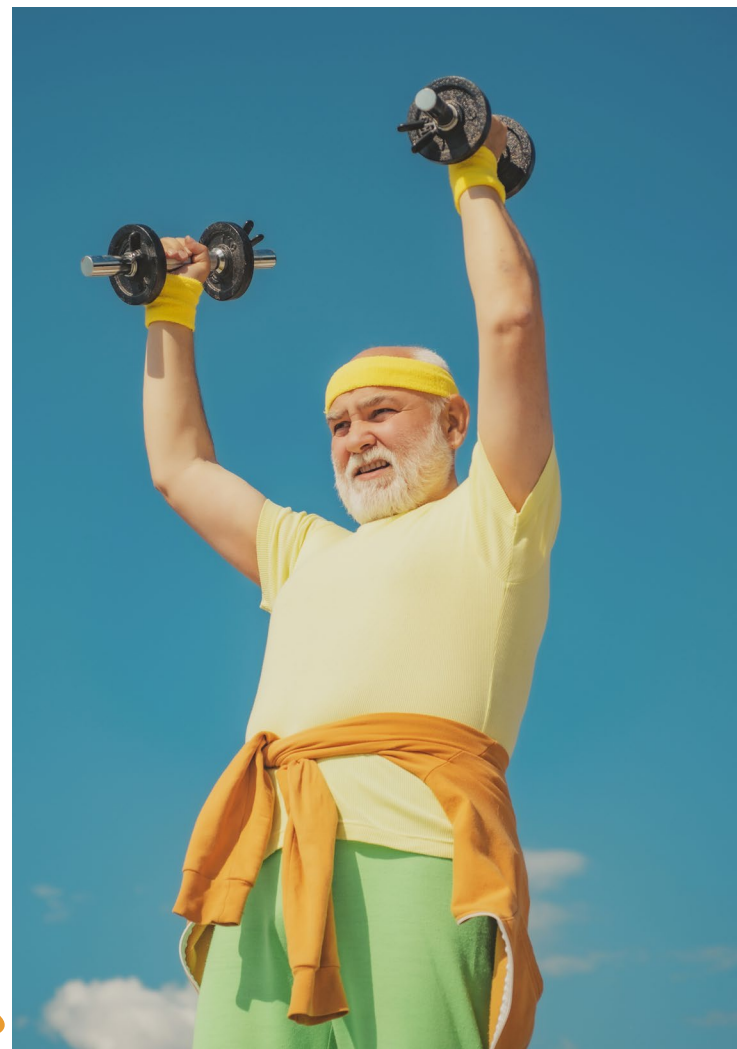
**Type of measure:** Political

**Implemented by:** The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport

**Target groups:** Older citizens

**Resources needed:** Public funding and political will

**Issue addressed:** Political inclusion of older citizens



<sup>2</sup> Alliance for Justice, s.d. Available at: [https://mffh.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/AFJ\\_what-is-advocacy.pdf](https://mffh.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/AFJ_what-is-advocacy.pdf)

## BAGSO

**BAGSO** is a federal association of senior citizens' organisations. It advocates at political, societal and business levels for the rights of older people, their social security and active ageing. Some of its activities include: putting topics about the quality of life of older people on the political agenda, identifying the steps for providing better life to the older adults and stimulating political action at all levels.

It is an umbrella organisation with more than 120 members – clubs and associations supporting or advocating for the rights of older people. The aim of its creation is the building of senior citizens' organisations network, the creation of a forum for topics related to older people and making the voices of older people heard at the political level.

Except for its political work, BAGSO promotes scientific work in the field of ageing and is a regular publisher of information on relevant topics. It also takes part in various application projects and supports research projects in the field of ageing society. Moreover, BAGSO holds different events focusing on different matters of ageing.



### Info box

**Start year:** 1989

**State:** Ongoing

**Scope:** National (Germany)

**Type of measure:** Associational

**Implemented by:** Eleven senior citizens' organisation

**Target groups:** Older citizens

**Resources needed:** Networking

**Issue addressed:** Political inclusion of older citizens



### What can be done?

In most European countries there are different places where older people can file a complaint about discrimination, such as the Ombudsman office or the Non-Discrimination Agency Office. Although their decisions are legally valid, they often lack the mandate and resources to pursue actions.

When it comes to the political and social inclusion of older people, it is important to ensure that they can speak up and are empowered to change the environment they are inhabiting. Organisations by older people advocating or advising for their own rights should be encouraged and supported. A support system for people with complaints should be developed to provide legal and/or personal help and advice.

Sustainability can be reached by expanding the network of seniors' organisations, providing funding and resources for them and ensuring that the needs of older people are addressed at the political level and in legislation.



## Good practices in the built environment

*Inadequate facilities in buildings often impede older individuals from carrying out essential tasks or engaging in activities they enjoy. This lack of accessibility restricts their mobility and independence, hindering their ability to fully participate in daily life. From inaccessible entrances to a lack of handrails and elevators, these barriers pose significant challenges for older people.*

*Additionally, the cities' infrastructure often lacks accessible organisation of streets, buildings and transportation. This limits the opportunities for seamless travel and thus active living and ageing.*

*Improved infrastructure is essential to address these issues, ensuring that buildings are equipped with necessary features such as ramps, grab bars, and wider doorways to accommodate the needs of older individuals, and seamlessly connecting the built environment. By prioritising accessibility in cities and buildings, we can enhance the quality of life and inclusion for older members of our communities.*

### Ageing and the City: making urban spaces work for older people

The HelpAge International report "[Ageing and the City](#)" presents the main problems connected to the city's infrastructure which makes it inaccessible to older people.

The report focuses on spaces, health and security and presents realities in older people's lives in the city (especially in low- and middle-income countries). The main topics include:

- Reclaiming urban spaces for all by making the streets more walkable, public transportation more accessible and the livelihoods more street-based.
- Healthy ageing in the cities by community-based support, combating the impact of air pollution and the rising number of incidences of non-communicable diseases.
- Safety and security in cities for older people in times of social, economic or political tension; the crimes and insecurity affecting older people; the challenges faced by older people in humanitarian crises, and refugee crises.

The report suggests that through political measures and economic incentives, the cities can be a lot more hospitable place for older people.

### Info box

Start year: 2016

State: Completed

Scope: International

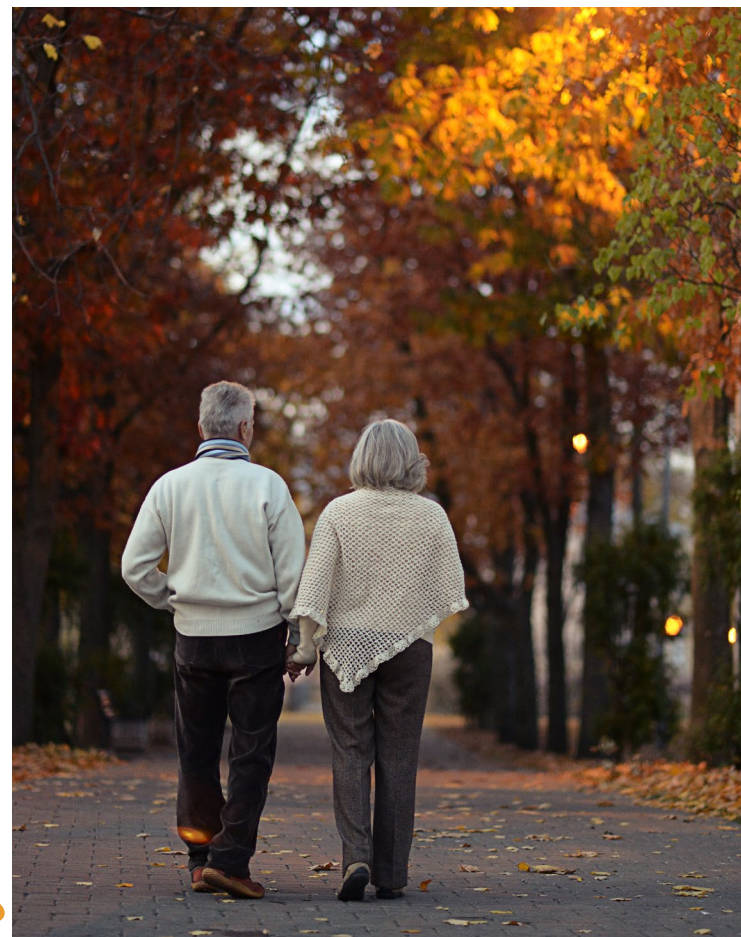
Type of measure: Associational

Implemented by: HelpAge International

Target groups: Older citizens

Resources needed: Political will and public funding

Issue addressed: Accessible cities for older people



### Voorall Foundation, the Netherlands

Voorall is an interest group working on the local level in The Hague. The foundation performs tests on the accessibility of the built environment for people with physical, mental, sensory and/or chronic illnesses. The idea is to allow all people to move freely in the city having full control and ability to participate in society.

Voorall Foundation advises the City Council based on their expertise and testing of the city's facilities. Moreover, there are workshops at the Voorall Academy and information regarding accessible spaces for people with different disabilities.

The main principles of the foundation are inclusion and accessibility by reducing the number of obstacles for the target group. Additionally, people with disabilities are empowered to find and report these hurdles themselves and help to improve the built environment. Even though the initiative is for people with disabilities, older people with disabilities or chronic diseases also benefit from Voorall's activities. Besides, it facilitates the active ageing of the population by making the city environment easily accessible for all.

### Info box

**Start year:** 2006

**State:** Ongoing

**Scope:** Local (the Hague)

**Type of measure:** Associational

**Implemented by:** Voorall

**Target groups:** People with disabilities

**Resources needed:** Coordination, cooperation with municipality and social organisations, companies and healthcare providers

**Issue addressed:** Accessible infrastructure for older people



### What can be done?

The built environment should be organised in a way that allows active and healthy living not only for older people, but for the whole society. Except for accessible buildings, organised city spaces and accessible and timely public transportation, there is also a need for focusing on developing the local spaces. Municipalities should provide all the needed services in the daily lives of older persons so that they can be active and independent.

Municipalities should work together with associations and the government to providing better local services for older people. Sustainability can be achieved through the integrated approach and mutual effort of all sides.



## Active and healthy ageing

Active and healthy ageing is crucial for maintaining health, well-being, and social connectedness as people grow older. Creating environments suitable for older individuals involves designing accessible infrastructure, implementing age-friendly policies, providing health and social services, and promoting lifelong learning.

Most EU countries already have national strategies for active and healthy ageing. By supporting it, nations can reduce healthcare costs, combat social isolation, and uphold the human rights of older adults to live with dignity and autonomy.

Associations are also active in implementing new approaches towards older people. Some of them include:

- Building bridges through solidarity between different generations
- Including art as a tool for communication (especially for people with dementia and other cognitive diseases),
- Using sports for prevention of diseases,
- Improving IT competencies and the skills and knowledge of older people.

All of these actions ensure that older adults can continue to contribute to society economically, socially, and intellectually.

### Golden Age Festival

[Golden Age Festival](#) is the European Gymnastics festival for people over fifty. It offers participants the possibility to improve and show off their abilities, try out new activities, cultures and sports and make new friendships with people from all over Europe. Except for the festival itself, throughout the whole week, group presentations and leisure activities are planned.

This initiative is an excellent example of how to deliver valuable and entertaining experiences to older adults. The event also raises awareness about the importance of sports activities for prevention and promotes this kind of competition as a way of learning new things, meeting new people, and... merely having fun.

### Aconchego (Home-sharing), Portugal

[Aconchego](#) is a programme aiming at promoting the well-being of older adults and their families. University students are offered housing in older people's residences as a way of building bridges between generations. The idea is to overcome the loneliness of older adults by accommodating students at the age of up to 35, for free. Older adults and students get connected and have the opportunity to share experiences and build friendships. In this way, Aconchego not only provides mutual benefits for both sides, but also changes the social perceptions of ageing at the societal level.



### Silver Line (Sidabrinė linija), Lithuania

[Silver Line](#) is an initiative which aims at overcoming the loneliness of older people through befriending and emotional support helpline. Trained volunteers make regular calls to older people at a regular specified time. Each volunteer communicates with the same person so that they can build a connection and friendship. Older people's communication needs are fulfilled in this way.

The initiative can be expanded to sending letters or emails, online chat, and other ways of communication.

### Baba Residence, Bulgaria

[Baba Residence](#) is an outstanding demonstration of an initiative for providing additional profit for older people. Older people's pensions are usually very low putting them at the verge of poverty. Therefore, such campaigns for providing opportunities for additional profit are very beneficial.

"Residence Grandma" brings older people from villages together with younger people from cities building bridges between generations. The volunteers stay in the village for one month to develop their ideas. In this way, they collaborate with the locals to generate a profitable product. For example, a CD of local traditional music was released, and handcrafted goods were sold. The initiative is good not only for providing working opportunities for of older people, but also for fighting isolation, especially in the small villages of Bulgaria.



## SAA – Experiences and recommendations

*As demographic tendencies predict population reductions and more people aged 65 and over within the European Union (8th Cohesion Report, 2022), there is a need for corresponding measures and cultural shift. Providing equal opportunities and quality of life for older adults should be at the core of the measures. Changing the negative images of older people within society is important for tackling ageism in a sustainable way.*

### Ageism is a matter of human rights

“”

“Policy responses focusing on the loss of physical and mental capabilities of people as they age and on meeting ‘vulnerabilities’ and ‘needs’ contribute to a negative narrative of ageing, which neglects older people’s experience, their potential, and their contribution to society.

To change this negative construction of ageing, AGE supports the Fundamental Rights Agency’s approach and suggests that policy reforms must move away from needs-based approaches, aimed at responding to ageing ‘problems’, and must shift the focus to the individual, a human being with fundamental rights and inherent human dignity.”

AGE Platform Europe, EU

### A combined approach at vertical and horizontal level is a way to ensure the rights of older people

“”

“Policies for older people should provide a combined approach at vertical and horizontal levels. Ministries should work together to provide equal opportunities for all ages in social, work, health, advocacy and structural spheres. Moreover, national institutions should work closely with municipalities to provide better services at a local level. Initiatives at a local level tend to be the most beneficial for older people as they acknowledge specific needs for this group.”

Alzheimer Bulgaria Association, Bulgaria

### Many cases of age discrimination are not reported because of normalisation of negative images

“”

“In society, many negative images of old age exist, which have a great influence on our thinking about ageing. Negative attitudes and stereotypes are widespread and are also internalised by older adults. A large number of unreported cases of discrimination can therefore be assumed. Education and awareness-raising measures are needed to increase people’s sensitivity and thus promote equality.”

ISIS Institut für Soziale Infrastruktur, Germany





### Active and healthy ageing initiatives and measures for ensuring the quality of life of older adults are important for providing equal opportunities for all ages

“Increasing the financial support gained by older adults in situations of poverty allows the beneficiary to improve their quality of life and access elementary assets such as food, and hygiene or even to allow to pay the rent. This form of measure is achieved by the taxes paid in the country, which may imply increasing the taxes in other countries, however, the short- and long-term results are positive.

Initiatives that promote intergenerational contact like home-sharing allow to reduce the stereotypes against ageing and decrease the loneliness many older adults are exposed to. International campaigns that raise awareness of discrimination may allow European approaches to tackle ageism.”

SHINE2Europe, Portugal

### Protection against age discrimination should be ensured in all areas in society. It should not be only a matter of policies, but a matter of a cultural shift of society.

“Age discrimination is only prohibited by law in a few areas, such as the labour market. In many areas, there are no specific laws and regulations. This means that sanctions or legally binding assistance for those affected by age discrimination remain a rarity. Offenders are often only reprimanded and asked to change their behaviour and policies, with no further action available to the victims. Clearer regulations and greater awareness of stereotypes are important in order to take the complaints of older people seriously and to advocate for a cultural change in society.”

AFEdeemy, the Netherlands

### Funding and political commitment is needed for successful implementation of strategies for active and healthy ageing and against age discrimination

“The National Strategy for Demography, Migration and Integration for 2018-2030 aims, among others, to provide opportunities for older people to integrate into society, participate in social and political life and in the labour market, and strengthen intergenerational relations. Such strategies should be resourced and supported by high-level political commitment to achieve the intended goals.”

SIC, Lithuania

# Get inspired!

## Political measures

- [Global Report on Ageism](#) (United Nations)
- [#AWorld4AllAges](#)
- [EU Demography Toolbox](#) (Europe)

## Associational measures

- [AGE Platform Europe](#)
- [#STOPIDADISMO](#) (Portugal)
- [Initiative "Oll Inklusiv"](#) (Germany)

## Health

- [Access of older people to long-term care at home and in society – policies and reality](#) (Bulgaria)
- [Transportation of patients with mobility problems, special health conditions, dementia, low income](#) (Lithuania)

## Social

- [#Ageing Equal](#)
- [Images of Old Age](#) (Germany)
- [October – the month of seniors](#) (Lithuania)
- [Initiative Zeitentausch](#) (Germany)
- [Anti-ageism clearing house](#)

## Work

- [Campaign: "Open up instead of closing down"](#) (Austria)
- [Equal Treatment Act](#) (Germany)

## Construction

- [Voorall](#) (Netherlands)
- [Ageing and the city: making urban spaces work for older people"](#)

## Advocacy

- [Council of Elders](#) (Netherlands)
- [BAGSO](#) (Germany)
- [Glasgow Declaration of Alzheimer Europe](#)
- [Projecten & Publicatie | Stichting iDb voor Inclusie en discriminatie bestrijding](#)
- [Discriminatie.nl](#) (Netherlands - with Google Translate available)

## Active Ageing

- [Golden Age Festival](#)
- [Silver Line](#) (Lithuania)
- [A RUTIS](#) (Third Age University, Portugal)
- [Let's Outrun Dementia Together](#) (Bulgaria)
- [Baba Residence](#) (Bulgaria)
- [Home-sharing Aconchego](#) (Portugal)
- [Solidarity Supplement for Older People](#) (Portugal)







# Smart Against Ageism



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