



## Recommendation 1796 (2007)<sup>1</sup>

# The situation of elderly persons in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. There is no denying the fact that Europe is ageing. However, old age must be regarded not as an illness but as a highly complex progressive process requiring a new approach to social policies.
2. Elderly persons possess an extremely diverse range of experience, skills, needs and concerns and constitute a new source of richness on account of their private and professional experience.
3. The Parliamentary Assembly takes this opportunity to congratulate the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on its proposal to draw up a charter on inter-generational co-operation, aimed at establishing forums for dialogue between the generations.
4. A person's age is no longer an indicator of health, wealth or social status, and there is a pressing need to change approaches and stereotypes related to ageing and to adjust policies accordingly, notably with regard to the compulsory retirement age. Increased life expectancy also has significant implications for social protection systems in the Council of Europe member states.
5. In this connection, the Assembly refers to one of the conclusions of the United Nations 2nd World Assembly on Ageing held in Madrid in 2002, according to which "Older persons should have the opportunity to work for as long as they wish and are able to, in satisfying and productive work".
6. Unfortunately, elderly persons still too often encounter discrimination, whether in their daily lives or in a professional context. This discrimination concerns their employment, their access to health care, education and financial services and their involvement in political decision making. In this context, the Assembly considers that extremely rapid action is needed to end, inter alia, the scandalous situations observed in certain institutions or retirement homes and to prevent elderly people from suffering from social exclusion and having to live in unacceptable conditions incompatible with the fundamental principles governing member states. Increased life expectancy must be a blessing for everyone.
7. Bearing in mind Article 23 of the revised European Social Charter (ETS No. 163), which provides that elderly persons shall have access to "the health care and services necessitated by their state", the Assembly deplores the fact that in some countries elderly persons may be denied treatment because of its high cost.
8. In this connection, the Assembly underlines the need for appropriate legislation or collective agreements, not least in respect of dependent elderly persons living in institutions or retirement homes.
9. The Assembly points out that the majority of elderly persons in the member states are women, who form a particularly vulnerable group which is discriminated against in many ways. Furthermore, the insecurity of elderly women is exacerbated by inadequate social support and their low income. It can also be noted that it is frequently women who have the responsibility of caring for elderly persons, obliging them to stop working with all the ensuing consequences for their income level and future pension.

---

1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 24 May 2007 (see [Doc.11179](#), report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Bockel; and [Doc. 11200](#), opinion of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, rapporteur: Mrs Cliveti).



10. The Assembly draws attention to the particular situation of elderly migrants and elderly disabled people. Elderly migrants face a particular risk of double or even triple discrimination and requires specific policies and culturally sensitive services, as outlined in [Recommendation 1619 \(2003\)](#) on rights of elderly migrants. Moreover, governments should recognise the significant contribution that elderly migrants have made to economic growth in the past and the important role they can still play in helping new generations of migrants to integrate in the host country.

11. The Assembly accordingly recommends that the Committee of Ministers request the member states to:

11.1. regarding social protection systems:

1. invite the social partners and the relevant international organisations to hold a debate on pension reform;
2. take the consequences of demographic trends into account in their social and economic policies;
3. take the necessary steps to ensure the funding and long-term viability of social protection systems (pension systems, health care and other social benefits) so as to avoid the risk of economic dependency;
4. review social support programmes for the elderly;
5. sign and ratify multilateral social security agreements, namely the European Convention on Social Security (ETS N°. 78);

11.2. regarding employment of elderly people and their participation in local affairs:

1. develop policies for the employment of elderly persons, seeking to keep younger elderly persons in jobs so that they remain in the working population;
2. implement new patterns of working time so as to be able to derive maximum benefit from elderly persons' professional skills and knowledge;
3. encourage local authorities to develop projects aimed at involving elderly persons in decision making and reinforcing inter-generational solidarity;
4. create forums for exchanges between the generations of experience and skills in areas such as education, art, history, traditions, crafts, etc.;
5. foster voluntary work by elderly persons;

11.3. regarding assistance and support for families:

1. strengthen assistance and support measures for families by introducing a system of special allowances, in particular for those caring for the elderly, and thereby promote greater family involvement when elderly people encounter health problems;
2. encourage supplementary and specific allowances in the case of loss of autonomy;
3. expand support facilities in the form of short-stay institutions for the elderly;
4. draw up, at European level, model rules on minimum standards for elderly persons in institutional care;

11.4. regarding access to health care:

1. improve health-care systems and make them accessible to all elderly persons, ensuring they receive appropriate medical care with specific attention to their nutritional needs;
2. establish decent palliative and end-of-life care services for elderly persons;
3. provide special training for individuals caring for elderly persons at home and for medical practitioners;
4. adapt the existing structures for the provision of health care and assistance to the elderly in order to make them culturally appropriate to the needs of elderly migrants;

11.5. regarding vulnerable groups:

1. launch a process of reflection on the consequences arising from the migration of elderly persons;
2. establish a special support programme for ageing immigrants, women and people with disabilities;
3. establish preventive health-care systems for elderly persons;

4. provide specially adapted language courses and other activities fostering inclusion and participation of elderly migrants and support non-governmental organisations in their activities and assistance programmes in this regard;
- 5.
6. provide practical information to elderly migrants about receiving social welfare, pensions and health care in the host country and the country of origin, via public institutions, community centres, immigrant organisations, cultural centres and religious institutions;
7. facilitate links between elderly migrants and their countries of origin.