

September 2024

European Commission priorities for 2024-2029

The perspective of the European Seniors Union (ESU)

Dear President von der Leyen,

As the announcement of nominees for the new European Commission approaches and a new Commission will soon take office for the next five years, we, as European Seniors' Union (ESU), member association of the European People's Party (EPP), would like to highlight some of our main concerns.

Allow us to start by congratulating you for the support of the European Parliament as President of the European Commission president for a consecutive term. Your political guidelines, building on the achievements of your previous mandate and developing brand-new initiatives where most required. We stand with you on your proposed guidelines, toward a more competitive Europe, boosting the EU defence ambitions, protecting our planet, ensuring social fairness, defending our democracy will be successfully implemented.

As ESU, playing our role in civil society as active senior citizens, we are following these political developments with high interest and would like to underline the following considerations regarding the developments in our societies.

Seniors deserve more attention, both in terms of their active participation in society and ensuring the necessary care, especially long-term care.

As ESU, we would like to see more attention being paid to demographic change. This is one of the most impactful challenges for our societies. Living in an 'ageing' continent, we need to adapt our societies into 'age-friendly' living environments and look at 'ageing' not as a challenge of and for older persons but for the whole society, and effecting everyone's life.

We therefore would want to see more attention being paid to the group of seniors, to ensure that their perspective is being taken into account.

We understand that the policies related to 'demographic change' and 'intergenerational fairness', will also encompass seniors, but amore 'explicit' mention, similar to the mention of young people, is in our eyes, preferable.

Young people rightly receive attention in the guidelines, both in terms of participation, education, welfare and other fields.

The opportunities and problems for older people lie in other areas, and need explicit attention in policy making. The group of seniors, a growing group in the population, counts on active involvement

in the policies that affect them. Seniors want to be assured of respect for their human dignity in all circumstances of life and, when necessary, count on the necessary care, especially long-term care. They want visibility and respect in future European policies.

In the presentation of the guidelines, we missed that visibility.

The new Commission needs an anchor point to address the opportunities and challenges of demographic change.

As ESU, we recommend that the new Commission establishes an anchor point for policies and actions to address the opportunities and challenges of demographic change, considering the differences between regions and Member States.

In the previous European Commission, the responsibility for the coordination of political actions concerning demography were -for the first time- entrusted to a member of the Commission (VP Dubravka Suica). She introduced new concepts and action plans and presented ageing as an aspect of all policy sectors that needed to be mainstreamed. At all levels of government, answers must be found to cope with the opportunities and challenges brought about by demographic change, from housing, to working conditions, to accessibility of public spaces, to digital literacy, healthy food and care. Special attention must be given to the enhancement of the status of carers, the position of informal carers and work-life balances in social and family policies.

The new Commission will be able to build on the policies of previous years, with a focus on safeguarding the rights of older persons, the interpretation of ageing as an aspect of the life cycle, the implementation of the European Care Strategy. We would also like to see the development of new areas of work, such as the improvement of seniors' media literacy, the protection of seniors in the online environment against abuse and fraud, the attention for the physical and psychological well-being of the older generation through incentives for sports and active citizenship.

Dear President von der Leyen,

As European Seniors Union, we support and call for solidarity with younger and future generations, as all age groups deserve fairness, solidarity and equal rights. We hope that the EU will continue to develop a new vision on ageing, one that moves away from ageism and seeing old age as a burden but, instead, celebrates longevity and facilitates the contribution of older people to society. This is critical to ensure that everyone, no matter our age, enjoys equal rights as EU citizens.



We wish you every success in your future endeavors at the head of the European Commission and hope that, as active citizens, we can play our role in the development of a Europe for all ages.

President: Stefaan Vercamer

Secretary General: Patrick Penninckx