



34th United Nations International Day of Older Persons

**Ageing with Dignity:
The Importance of Strengthening Care and Support Systems for Older Persons
Worldwide**

Let's celebrate our engagement in the global movement for the promotion of older persons' rights
Looking ahead to 1th October 2024

On 1 October 2024 the older persons are in focus worldwide. Since 1990 the United Nations have declared October 1st, as the 'International Day of older Persons'. On this day, we globally pay attention to older persons, their capacities and potentials, the respect for their human rights, their needs and expectations.¹

As European Seniors' Union (ESU), we promote this global movement, highlighting the role of older persons in society and strengthening the rights of every one to age in dignity and without discrimination. We are grateful for what previous generations have built in the field of human rights, prosperity and wellbeing. We can however not take the future for granted. We engage to create inclusive, sustainable and democratic societies for all, through our daily commitment.

It is our pleasure to express the involvement and hopes of seniors for safeguarding the basic values of human dignity, democracy and solidarity to create well-being for all generations, so that nobody is left behind.

Please find below a general introduction to the 34th United Nations International Day of Older Persons. We hope that it can inspire you to create a celebration on this Day.

Stefaan Vercamer - Patrick Penninckx

President ESU - Secretary General ESU

¹ [International Day of Older Persons | United Nations](#)

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The importance of Strengthening Care and Support Systems for older Persons worldwide.

Major challenges

In recent years, the European Union has been facing major changes in the geopolitical context and an unprecedented series of crises and challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the rapidly unfolding climate crisis and environmental degradation, the repercussions of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the growing global competition. Acknowledging that economic and social progress are intertwined, the EU and Member States recently recognized the need to build more inclusive and sustainable societies.²

This means that our societies have to respond to today's longevity challenges. It doesn't mean that we look at 'growing old' just as a burden. On the contrary, the contribution of older people in our families and societies in the economic field, in terms of service as volunteers, is invaluable. Our society needs to look with 'new' eyes at older persons and also at growing old. It means that we look at it as a dimension in the life course and also that we reserve for 'taking care of each other' a place in our thinking, acting and in the organisation of our living environment.

We hope and call the new EU Commission to continue the policy trends on demographic change by implementing the EU Care Strategy, and mainstreaming a vision on ageing as an aspect of the whole life course, taking into account the competences of different policy levels, and the differences between regions and local traditions.

Strengthening care and support systems

Given the global demographic shift into longevity, and although older persons often are healthy until their high age, the need for different forms of care provision and social support services is growing. Moreover, participation in society is not only depending from a person's health, but also depending on the environment he/she is living in. In recent decades we have seen the caregiving landscape undergoing significant transformations, encompassing a wide range of needs for both paid and unpaid support, in both formal and informal settings. The need for specialized care has become integral to the broader healthcare demands of ageing. This is particularly critical for older persons with conditions

² Guided by the 'European Social Pillar'. After its proclamation by the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the European Commission in 2017, the European Pillar of Social Rights has been serving as a compass to provide guidance in addressing common social challenges.

such as dementia, which is a leading cause of care dependency and disability in old age worldwide. Amid rising demand for long term care, growth in the number of caregivers is not keeping pace. These deficits translate to the great problem of older persons in need of care who have no access to quality long-term care.

There is an urgent worldwide need to expand training and educational opportunities in the fields of geriatrics and gerontology for health professionals, social care professionals, and informal caregivers who work with older persons.

Rethinking approaches to care and support systems will benefit today's older persons and those who care for them, as well as future generations of older persons. Care and support systems for older persons should be tailored to the needs, values, and preferences of those persons who need care and to the needs of caregivers. They should go beyond the medical aspects of care, to adopt a life-course approach that encompasses an individual's culture, life history, social support network, and identity, and giving older persons control over care decisions. Member States should pursue a more equitable, person-centered approach to care, safeguarding the human rights of both caregivers and persons in need of care. This approach should operate across Governments, civil society, communities, and households, as well as the private sector, to address the needs in the provision of both formal and informal care.

Dear friends and colleagues,

Let us join the global celebration of this year's United Nations International Day of Older Persons (October 1th 2024) and focus on the theme of "Ageing with Dignity: The Importance of Strengthening Care and Support Systems for Older Persons Worldwide".

The UN invites us to discuss policies, legislation, and practices that strengthen care and support systems for older persons, as well as the need to expand training and educational opportunities in geriatrics and gerontology, address the global shortage of care workers, and recognize the diverse contributions of caregivers.

Let us emphasize the importance of protecting the human rights of both older persons and caregivers, promoting person-centered approaches to care that respect the dignity, beliefs, needs, and privacy of older persons, and for their right to make decisions about their care and quality of their lives.

Let us call for the protection of human rights of older persons worldwide.

Let us promote quality healthcare, foster intergenerational dialogue and more inclusive and age-friendly societies for all.

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