

NSA Written Statement on

Agenda item 10 - Ageing in living: a strategy for promoting a lifetime health and well-being in the WHO European Region 2026-2030

Thanks to the leadership of WHO, the UN launched in 2021 the Decade of Healthy Ageing which aims to give everyone the opportunity to add life to years, wherever they live. We are now halfway: while four of the six WHO Regions have a strategy promoting healthy ageing, it is urgent for the European Region to be as well-equipped to meet the needs of an ageing society. **Therefore, we welcome the proposal for the “Ageing is Living Strategy”.**

Living longer is one of humanity’s greatest achievements. But above all, what people want is to enjoy good health and well-being in later life. The four core action areas identified to articulate the strategy pave the way towards a society where everyone can age with dignity:

- **Investing in health promotion and prevention from early childhood and continuously all along the life course is essential:** ageing is a life-long process and the accumulation of inequalities over time impacts the way people age. For example, exposure to air pollution, tobacco smoke and occupational hazards can increase vulnerability in later years. Addressing these determinants can significantly improve independence and quality of life.
Seeking alignment and complementarity with the new child and adolescent health and well-being strategy would be critical.
- **Transforming health and care systems has become even more obvious with the COVID pandemic.** We need to take action to lay the foundations of empowering, accessible, affordable and quality care model that respects people’s rights and diversity. Holistic integrated services should be developed and planned with patients, their relatives/carers, as well as with healthcare professionals to ensure continuum of care. Moreover, it is fundamental for these services to address clearly co-morbidity and conditions affecting disproportionately vulnerable population, including malnutrition, communicable and non-communicable, vascular and oral diseases.
- **Creating age-friendly environments is a cornerstone to enhance everyone’s autonomy and participation, which contributes to both mental and physical health.** For example, improving air quality, green spaces in cities and indoor ventilation are actions that can effectively improve standards of living. Likewise, it is essential to

identify and remove barriers that limit access and participation, including for people with hidden disabilities. This action area requires to look beyond the usual remit of health ministries and to coordinate across ministries, in a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach so that every measure empowers people to decide how and where they wish to live.

- **Changing the narrative to reframe ageing not as a story of decline, but of potential is crucial to foster healthy ageing:** evidence shows that ageist attitudes and practices contribute to poorer physical and mental health outcomes, social exclusion, and economic insecurity. Changing the narrative also means a meaningful engagement of citizens, reflecting their full diversity within and across age groups.

The European region is at a turning point: for the first time ever there are more people 65 plus than children and adolescents. Developing, adopting and implementing a strategy on healthy ageing will not only respond to the needs of today's older people but foremost it will ensure that today's younger people enjoy longer and healthier lives. Promoting healthy ageing is a shared societal goal across generations to ensure the long-term sustainability of healthcare systems.

We call on Member States to engage in a constructive dialogue for the development of the Ageing is Living Strategy, including by working with civil society organisations at national and grassroots levels.

On our side, we commit to continue working alongside WHO EURO and Member States towards the preparation of the strategy and we look forward to the 76th Regional Committee where we hope to see the Strategy adopted.

Signatories

- AGE Platform Europe
- EuroHealthNet
- EFAD - European Federation of the Associations of Dietitians
- ERS – European Respiratory Society
- FDI World Dental Federation (FDI)
- IALP – International Association of Communication and Sciences and Disorders
- IFA – International Federation on Ageing
- International Cerebral Palsy Society & Cerebral Palsy Europe
- Movendi International
- NCD Alliance
- VAS European Independent Foundation in Angiology/ Vascular Medicine
- WONCA Europe