



Position Paper I

Health and care for older persons are an asset, not a burden for economy

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The current societal challenge is to prevent the economic challenges being faced from becoming a social and health crisis for older people and hence a crisis for society in general. It is crucial that investment in the social, housing and health sectors and in human capital be maintained.

The challenging economic environment presents a unique political opportunity to put in place innovative new ways and means for older people to contribute as productive members of society. Current political decisions will determine whether the crisis leaves a long-term legacy of increased numbers of older people in poverty and isolation, or sustainable changes that strengthen social protection, housing and health care and facilitate the participation of older persons in communities.

Some facts and figures:

- The current perception is that as people enter later life, they become an economic burden for society, one that is shouldered by the younger generation. Positive relationships are more likely to be fostered where social and physical environments support the active engagement of older people in society.
- Living longer will be a more positive experience if older people have the conditions to enable them to live full, healthy and independent lives and if they have the opportunity to contribute to the communities in which they live. A much larger and healthier population of older people will create a demand for new goods and services, which should itself act as a stimulus to economic growth.

- Older people have a wealth of skills and experience to offer society and the labor market. Labor market participation at older ages is on the rise, many older people not in work contribute to society through unpaid caring and volunteering (carers of all ages contribute the equivalent of £119 billion every year in the UK) and older consumers (aged 65 and over). Europeans over 65 already have a spending capacity of over €3,000 billion.

EAHSA therefore calls for Member States of the EU, all stakeholders and the aged care services and housing sectors:

- To consider older persons, their health and health and social care as an asset, not a burden for the economy;
- To promote and to make visible what older people and their care can contribute to socio-economic development and to the EU2020 Strategy in terms of economic growth, job creation and sustainable development;
- To de-stigmatise the view of older people and to actively campaign for a positive image of older persons and elderly care;
- To create opportunities for older people to stay active in society.
- To invest more (financial) resources in research into care for older persons and into education and training for carers and in care infrastructures;
- To open EU funding mechanisms to care services and housing arrangements for older persons.