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REPORT

on the situation of women approaching retirement age
(2011/2091(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Rapporteur: Edit Bauer

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

**on the situation of women approaching retirement age
(2011/2091(INI))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on European Union, in particular Articles 2 and 3,
- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular Article 19,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, in particular Articles 21, 23 and 25,
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 21 September 2010 entitled ‘Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015’ (COM(2010)0491),
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 29 April 2009 dealing with the impact of an ageing population in the EU (2009 Ageing Report) (COM(2009)0180),
- having regard to the Commission Recommendation of 3 October 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market (2008/867/EC)¹,
- having regard to the report commissioned by the Commission of 22 July 2010 entitled ‘Access to healthcare and long-term care - Equal for women and men?’,
- having regard to the report commissioned by the Commission of 24 November 2009 entitled ‘Gender mainstreaming active inclusion policies’,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 7 March 2011 on the European Pact for Gender Equality for the period 2011-2020,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 6 December 2010 on the impact of an ageing workforce and population on employment policies,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 7 June 2010 on active ageing,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 30 November 2009 on healthy and dignified ageing,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 8 June 2009 on equal opportunities for women and men: active and dignified ageing,
- having regard to the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions report of 1 May 2008 entitled ‘Working conditions of an ageing workforce’,
- having regard to the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted at the

¹ OJ L 307, 18.11.2008, p. 11.

Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/CONF.197/9 8) on 12 April 2002,

- having regard to the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),
 - having regard to its resolution of 7 September 2010 on the role of women in an ageing society¹,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A7-0291/2011),
- A. whereas gender equality and non-discrimination, inter alia on the basis of age, is a fundamental principle of the European Union enshrined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and one of the objectives and tasks of the Community,
- B. whereas the Europe 2020 Strategy sets a headline employment rate target of 75% for both women and men and states the objective of decreasing the number of those living at risk of poverty by 20 million; whereas the group of women over 50, due to the high levels of poverty and unemployment particular to this group, is therefore a decisive age-cohort in meeting both of these targets,
- C. whereas the persistence of gender stereotypes, compounded by the age discrimination faced by older people in the labour market, particularly reduces employment, training and promotion opportunities for older women and is partly responsible for the increased risk of poverty in old age,
- D. whereas discrimination based on sex is a specific kind of discrimination to the extent that it is systematic and systemic and cuts across, and is added to, all other forms of discrimination,
- E. whereas the employment market is far more dynamic and fluid today than ever before, which means that employment in the same area is no longer guaranteed for life; whereas therefore the economic crisis has shown that women have an important role to play within the job market,
- F. whereas Europe's future economic competitiveness, prosperity and inclusiveness depend crucially on its ability to effectively improve the use of its labour resources, not only by extending the employment period of life but also by creating the working conditions and social security systems which both support an improvement in working and living conditions and benefit the economy, whereas this also includes appropriate policies to reconcile work, family and private life and to tackle direct and indirect discrimination and gender stereotypes which lead to gender gaps in the labour market,
- G. whereas between 1990 and 2010 the working-age population (20-64 years) in the EU-27 increased by 1.8 %, the older population (aged 65+) increased by 3.7%, and the proportion

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2010)0306.

of younger people (0-19 years) decreased by 5.4%; whereas the proportion of the population aged 65+ is projected to increase from 17.4% in 2010 to 30% in 2060¹,

- H. whereas in 2008 the risk of poverty among elderly women stood at 22% as against 16% for elderly men²,
- I. whereas women are often and increasingly over-represented among the isolated elderly, as a consequence of rising divorce rates and the shorter life expectancy of men; whereas widows and lone elderly women in general are at a higher risk of poverty, isolation and social exclusion,
- J. whereas the employment rate of women aged 55-64 years was 37.8% in 2009, as against 54.8% for men of the same age³,
- K. whereas the unemployment rate is higher for women than men in 21 Member States and, even though the long-term unemployment rate is higher for men than women in 12 countries, women's unemployment is more likely to be disguised as 'inactivity' if they are married or have children,
- L. whereas the average hourly earnings of women under 30 are 92% of those of men, and 67.5% in the 50-59 age group⁴, and the average EU gender pay gap remains as high as 17.5%,
- M. whereas gender differences in socio-economic status are largely rooted in the traditional gender division of roles, where men are considered to bear the primary responsibility for breadwinning and women for unpaid housework and family care, including wider family care, which has a huge impact on women's ability, compared with men's, to accumulate social security entitlements, for example for retirement, and consequently their situation in old age, particularly in the event of divorce, separation or being widowed,
- N. whereas women are more likely to have slower, shorter and/or interrupted careers and lower average earnings than men, which is reflected in a higher gender pay gap and creates a gender differential in contributions to personal pension accounts, thus increasing women's risk of poverty in old age,
- O. whereas the gender gap is smaller before family formation and increases when individuals form a couple; whereas a fall in employment rate occurs for women at the birth of their first child and the labour market disadvantages accumulate in the earlier stages of their life cycle, connected to child-care, which at a later stage changes into care of elderly people, which often flows into in-work poverty,
- P. whereas, compared with men, older women often choose or are compelled to choose part-time work and more often leave the labour market by opting or being compelled to opt for early retirement,

¹ Staff working document: Demography report 2010, European Commission, page 62.

² List of 100 inequalities, European Institute for Gender Equality.

³ Report on Progress on Equality between Women and Men in 2010, European Commission, page 31.

⁴ The life of women and men in Europe - A statistical portrait, Eurostat, 2008, page 196.

- Q. whereas the importance of a gender-based approach to active labour market policies is widely acknowledged in almost all European countries but assessments of active labour market policies indicate that gender mainstreaming remains uneven and rather narrow in focus,
- R. whereas women over 50 often face twofold or multiple discrimination based on gender and age stereotypes, frequently exacerbated by their gender-specific work and life patterns (e.g. career breaks, part-time employment, re-employment after a period of unemployment, the fact that they may give up their jobs in order to look after their families or work in family businesses, especially in the distributive trades or in farming, without being paid a salary or belonging to a social security scheme, and the gender pay gap); whereas, therefore, women tend to face a greater accumulation of disadvantages than men from the same groups; whereas, in addition, in times of economic recession the women concerned are in even greater danger of being reduced to poverty,
- S. whereas in the labour market women are frequently regarded as ‘old’ at a much younger age than men; whereas 58% of Europeans regard age discrimination as widespread¹,
- T. whereas violence against older women is a severely underestimated issue due to older women's particular reticence in disclosing abuse, stereotyping by service providers who believe older women to be less at risk, and the reduced range of options available to older female victims of abuse,
- U. whereas education for equality from the earliest age, vocational guidance policies and policies to promote women’s employment are effective ways to stop discrimination of this kind for good,

General provisions

1. Welcomes the Commission’s decision to designate 2012 as the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between the Generations and calls on the Commission and Member States to take appropriate and effective steps to combat discrimination, including by tackling the stereotypes associated with gender and age discrimination and promoting solidarity between generations;
2. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that multiple discrimination against women over 50 is better reflected and effectively tackled in the open method of coordination regarding pensions, social inclusion, employment, changing gender stereotypes and inclusion of women on political and economic decision-making bodies;
3. Calls on the Member States to implement gender mainstreaming in the preparation and implementation of pension reform – a point which should also be taken into account in the upcoming White Paper on pension systems and other reforms in social security policy –, to promote use of more equality-enhancing actuarial calculation of pensions for men and women, to promote steps to decrease the risk of poverty, to tackle the poverty currently experienced by older people, to improve the quality, accessibility and affordability of (health) care and to end the practice of mandatory retirement, while allowing older women

¹ Special Eurobarometer 317, Discrimination in the EU in 2009, November 2009, page 71.

to participate in the labour market by tackling discrimination;

4. Calls on the Member States to make additional provision in their pensions legislation for widows' pensions so as to make older women less vulnerable to the risk of poverty;
5. Points to the importance of taking measures to promote the inclusion of women in the most vulnerable categories, that is to say, immigrants, women belonging to minorities, women with disabilities, women with little education, women without work experience, women in prison, etc., in order to guarantee their right to a decent life;
6. Calls on the Member States to take measures to ensure ageing with dignity without humiliation, discrimination or any form of violence against older women;
7. Points out that older women constitute an economic resource and a fund of experience and provide vital support to the community and to families as carers of dependent persons and also as advisers in work matters, bearing in mind their extensive professional experience, and, moreover, that they are helping to preserve the rural world;
8. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote initiatives to foster understanding of the language and culture of new technologies so as to enable the older female population to bridge the digital divide and increase their interpersonal and communication skills and their ability to manage their independence and their interests;
9. Calls on the Commission and Member States to conclude a study, in close cooperation with the European Institute for Gender Equality, on the situation of women over 50, in particular by focusing on their experiences in the labour market, care-giver experiences and how women and men use their time, and on health issues and other challenges they have to face;

Women on the labour market

10. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to create conditions enabling and helping older women to remain in and/or return to the labour market during the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, so they can use their potential on the labour market and so their rights are respected; calls on the Commission and the Member States also to implement measures that encourage employers to improve their equal opportunities policies so that ageist attitudes towards older women are tackled and so that older female employees receive equal access to for instance training, promotion, and career development;
11. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to establish without delay a comprehensive, multi-dimensional, gender-sensitive and age-friendly approach to employment and social policies in order to guarantee employment and social inclusion of women; calls on the Commission and the Member States to also carry out an in-depth review of the situation of the generation of older women who are already living in poverty and to speedily take appropriate, effective measures to take these women out of poverty;
12. Calls on the Member States to adequately address the multiple discrimination that older women are facing in seeking access to employment;

13. Calls on the Commission to further develop and improve the collection and analysis of accurate, relevant, comparable European gender- and age-specific data, particularly on the employment and unemployment rate of older women, including migrant and disabled women, the (informal) involvement of older women in (unpaid) care for their families and relatives, and on the percentage of dependent elderly people and on elder abuse, which should be subject to all current Member State data protection legislation;
14. Welcomes the fact that Member States have already acknowledged that patterns and causes of gender inequality in the labour market are strictly related to the life-cycle stage, and stresses that a life-cycle approach to work must therefore be promoted; urges the Member States, however, – in order to address life cycle challenges adequately – to tackle with focused measures the disadvantaged position of young and older women compared to men of the same age in their active labour market policies and not just address the latter to women and men in adulthood;
15. Calls on the Member States to exchange best practices in improving the quality of working conditions of older women, in order to create a sustainable and healthy workplace for them;
16. Encourages the Member States to include older women in life-long learning processes and to further develop and support flexible retraining programmes suitable for older women, by taking into consideration their specific needs and abilities in order to increase their employability and help to sustain an independent and active life, as well as share accumulated experience and knowledge with younger generations;
17. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that the disadvantages faced by women in the labour market, particularly those stemming from care responsibilities, should not penalise them in their pension or other social security entitlements;
18. Urges the Commission and the Member States to make provision in welfare systems for aggregation arrangements enabling contributions from periods of salaried employment and self-employment, or accounted for by different jobs, to be added together, if this has not yet been done;
19. Calls on the Commission and Member States to develop and promote gender-assessed pension systems as a means of support and a safeguard against older women's higher risk of poverty, taking into account career breaks due to caring obligations, in order to avoid creating new dependency traps;
20. Calls on the Commission and Member States to take, without delay, effective measures to implement the principle of equal pay for equal work (e.g. by means of a mandatory job evaluation scheme and equality action plan at the workplace) in order to eliminate the gender pay gap, which can also help to close the pension gap, with a view to reducing and ultimately eliminating the higher risk of poverty faced by – mainly older – women;
21. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to implement appropriate policies to reconcile work, family and private life and to integrate the ageing dimension into all relevant policies, by means of age mainstreaming, taking account of the various periods of life; calls on the Vilnius-based European Institute for Gender Equality to draw up the

necessary impact and research studies;

22. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to make full and efficient use of the existing EU instruments and programmes, including the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund, to increase participation of older women in labour markets and to tackle discrimination against older women in all areas;
23. Asks the Member States to encourage active participation by older women in the business sector by encouraging, and providing support for, women who start new businesses and facilitating women's access to financing, especially through microcredit, and equal representation of men and women in economic decision-making bodies, including in company boards;
24. Calls on the Member States to encourage companies to integrate age management principles and tools into their policy, particularly their staff policy, to adopt an 'age-friendly and gender-sensitive' policy in workplaces, to give the accumulated knowledge and experience of their older female employees more recognition and respect, and to develop a reliable, transparent information policy that gives older employees the opportunity to prepare for retirement in full knowledge of the facts; further calls on the Commission and the Member States to improve the procedures for imposing penalties on employers who discriminate against older female employees; draws attention to the need to include these policies in the Small Business Act;

Women as care-providers

25. Calls on the Member States to step up progress towards meeting the needs of families who have to take on responsibility for dependants and calls on the Commission to continue to support the development of care structures making use of the Structural Funds;
26. Asks the Member States to enhance the provision of quality care services, including home care for the elderly, to guarantee the accessibility and affordability of such quality care, to improve recognition of the value of the work undertaken by professional care-givers, and to support families providing care to older dependent persons, for example by compensating them financially for what they contribute and by advising and training them so that they are able to offer high-quality informal care;
27. Points to the need to make sufficient provision of an appropriately high standard for care services for children, older people and other dependent persons, which should be offered at affordable prices and compatible with full-time working so as to ensure that women will not be obliged to interrupt, abandon or cut short their careers in order to look after the needs of dependants in their care;
28. Points out that these care services for children and dependants constitute a substantial source of jobs that could be filled by older women, whose employment rate is currently one of the lowest;
29. Calls on the Member States to provide training and capacity-building in order to guarantee high-quality care services and counteract the staff shortages in the white sector (care and health) caused by demographic trends;

30. Encourages the Member States to extend access to parental leave for grandparents and children taking care of their parents, to recognise caring for dependent persons, while considering the possibility of developing a carer's leave and to provide services, training and counselling for care-givers;
31. Recognises that women approaching retirement age are often grandparents; recognises however that women approaching retirement should not be solely portrayed as care-givers; asks Member States therefore to consider child care facilities that can offer grandparents, should they wish, the freedom of choice to participate in other activities;
32. Encourages the Member States to promote civil involvement and inter-generational projects for older people by funding initiatives and schemes;
33. Calls on the Member States to take measures at all levels, including by supporting relevant NGOs, to address the specific needs of older persons, in particular older women living alone, in order to reduce their isolation and dependency and promote their equality, security and well-being;
34. Asks the Member States to consider exploring a range of accommodation options and supporting community groups and organisations as a way of combating isolation among elderly women and creating a favourable environment for intergenerational solidarity;
35. Acknowledges that elderly women should have a dignified choice to live however they may wish, whether this be alone or through communal living;

Health issues

36. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to recognise the gender dimension in health as an essential part of EU health policies and therefore asks the Commission and the Member States to further step up their efforts to adopt a dual strategy with gender and age mainstreaming and specific gender-related actions in EU and national health policies;
37. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to recognise the importance of gender- and age-sensitive curative and palliative health care; calls on the Member States to expand research into gender-related diseases, including research into the causes, possible prevention and treatments of these diseases;
38. Recognises the vital role of screening and preventive treatment in health care, and encourages the Commission to use the open method of coordination to ensure exchange of views, promote harmonisation of screening across the EU, identify best practices and establish guidelines;
39. Welcomes the efforts of some Member States which provide free access to prevention of gender-related diseases, and encourages Member States which have not yet done so to strengthen preventive healthcare for older women by providing, for example, for accessible and regular mammograms and cervical smear tests, to erase age limits in access to health prevention such as breast cancer screening, and to raise awareness of the importance of screening;

40. Encourages the Member States to further step up their efforts to adopt a gender mainstreaming strategy in health policies and to ensure equality of access to affordable health care and long-term care for both women and men, especially the older ones, and for those who face multiple disadvantages;
41. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to develop measures that ensure better health and safety at work, thus maintaining the employability and capabilities of workers and making for better health in old age;
42. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to combat all forms of violence against older women, recognising the underestimation of this problem, tackling societal stereotypes and ensuring that service providers are able to take into account the specific needs of older victims of violence, in order to ensure full enjoyment of human rights and achieve gender equality, and making full use of the DAPHNE programme;
43. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Women comprise no less than 50% of the population in any EU country, therefore women are a significant sector of the work force. What's more, Europe has the highest proportion of older women in the world.

One of the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy is to combat poverty and promote employment by increasing the rate of employment to 75% and reducing the poverty by 20 million.

Older people are a large and growing section of the EU's population. As Europe's populations became increasingly old, it is a huge challenge to ensure sustainable pensions because of low birth rates, shrinking workforce and growing number of healthy and long-lived pensioners. Older people represent an enormous cultural, social and professional resource. Their ongoing contribution to society, often in an unpaid capacity, is too often overlooked, and their potential for wider involvement and contribution left untapped. What's more, World War II baby boom generation will leave the labour market within the next years. If we want to fulfil the Europe 2020 targets, this is the last chance to keep them in the labour market. This generation has a 37% employment rate and poverty rate is the most expended among this generation, therefore they embody a huge potential to meet the 75% employment target and also to tackle poverty by ensuring a higher pension.

There is a generally spread fear that the older generation is becoming a heavy burden on younger and working-age people and this could result in tensions between generations. A key opportunity for tackling the challenge of demographic ageing and preserving intergenerational solidarity consists among others in ensuring that people stay longer on the labour market and remain healthy, active and autonomous for longer after they retire. The solidarity between generations has long been high on the EU agenda, both in terms of policy-making and of awareness-raising.

Women on the labour market

Older women face at least a twofold discrimination in the labour market based on gender and age, combined with their greater vulnerability in the labour market caused by women-specific work trajectories.

The employment rate of women between 55-64 years was 37.8% in 2009 compared to 54.8% of men of same age. The unemployment rate is higher for women than men in 21 Member States, and even though the long-term unemployment rate is higher for men than for women in 12 countries, women's unemployment is more likely to be hidden as 'inactivity' if they are married or have children. The incidence of part-time work is four times higher among women than men, while older female workers show the highest proportion of part-time employment at 37% compared with 12% of older men. Furthermore, gender pay gap is much higher at older age than at the beginning of the working career. It reflects the career breaks women need to make, in particular due to giving birth. In addition, there are fewer learning opportunities for women in general, in particular for mature women, making the adaptation to labour demand extremely difficult. Training and the development of new skills may thus help elderly women to participate more fully in the labour market.

In seniority, gender differences are mainly the results of the labour market disadvantage

women accumulated in their earlier stages of the life cycle, which leads to the persistency of in-work poverty, to early retirement and inactivity, and to the permanence in low-skilled and low-paid jobs.

Women have a greater likelihood for slower, shorter and/or interrupted careers and on average lower earnings than men. The gender differences in socio-economic status are partially rooted in the traditional gender division of labour, where men bear the primary responsibility for breadwinning and women for unpaid housework and family care, which has a huge impact on men's and women's ability to accumulate social security entitlements for their pension age. Often, women face disadvantages in the labour market, in particular because of their, often unpaid, care responsibilities, what results in penalising them in their pension entitlements. The lower lifetime earnings of women impacts on their pensions in schemes built on individual earnings and employment records, thus increasing risks of old age poverty. In addition, women have a longer life expectancy, because of which they predominate among the elderly. This leads to the fact that women are often and increasingly over-represented among the isolated elderly. Widows and lone elderly women in general are at a high risk of poverty, isolation and social exclusion.

Age discrimination of women over 50 in the labour market is reported more frequently than in other age groups and may take different forms. The issues of lack of training opportunities and skill obsolescence are particularly relevant for older women, due to more frequent career breaks caused by family related responsibilities and by the lower level of educational attainment compared with men of the same age. Moreover, health-related problems and skill obsolescence may prevent them from sustaining standard working hours, performing within normal working arrangements and exerting a good labour productivity. All these factors may induce or force the elderly to early retirement and inactivity.

Though the patterns and causes of gender inequality in the labour market are strictly related to the stage of lifecycle and the importance of promoting a lifecycle approach to work is widely acknowledged by most EU countries, the majority of the active labour market policies promoting gender equality are addressed to women and men in adulthood, often disregarding the disadvantaged position of young and old women compared with men of the same age.

Even though the majority of Member States recognise that older women are at a disadvantage in terms of labour inclusion, measures taken for older workers in recent years are, in general, either not explicitly gender mainstreamed or largely ignore the different situations of older men and women. The approach to active ageing has so far extensively focussed on senior worker employability, resulting in a dominant role played by pensions and social security reforms, with the main aim of postponing the age of retirements by law. However, most measures are based on the dominant male trajectory of work and retirement and are not explicitly gender mainstreamed. Thus, while repeated career breaks, part-time work, low pay and the gender pay gap characterise women's employment, in old age they may be the object of multiple discrimination. For example, in the labour market women are frequently regarded as 'old' at a much younger age than men, while care burdens can produce high barrier to the employment of older women. So a systematic and comprehensive approach to active labour market policies including special health and safety measures at workplaces with an explicit gender mainstreaming strategy is yet to be developed. For a better understanding of the situation and challenges as well as to predict the trends, comparable gender and age-specific data need to be collected and analysed.

Although retirement is the main reason for older men to be outside the labour market, the

picture is more mixed for older women. For them personal or family responsibilities are a more important reason for the non-participation than retirement.

Terminating the practice of compulsory retirement, providing greater care support facilities, in particular for older women and addressing the negative perceptions of certain older workers about their labour market prospects could result in significant increases in the active participation of older people. It should be considered to create appropriate employment opportunities and the right working and employment conditions to encourage older workers to remain in work for longer.

Interesting fact is that countries with high levels of female employment also have higher fertility rates, suggesting that achieving a satisfactory work–life balance for women may be crucial to both higher female employment and a relatively high fertility rate. Part-time work is seen as a good way of achieving a gradual transition from work to retirement, but only about 11% of men and 38% of women aged 55–64 years work part time. Thus, the typical transition still seems to be from full-time employment to full-time retirement.

Woman as care-givers

Older women represent an important contribution to the society in a variety of ways: they offer help to their children and grandchildren but also parents, they are the primary care-givers and work as volunteers, however the caring role of older people is not sufficiently appreciated.

The issue of long-term care is particularly sensitive to a gender approach, because in most European countries women are the majority of both the beneficiaries (due to their generally longer life expectancy) and the care suppliers (usually supplying unpaid, informal care which often impacts on their quality of life). The majority of carers for the elderly and the disabled are women and due to the phenomenon of the ageing population the care burden that women have to bear is constantly increasing, impacting also on their quality of life. In Europe a growing share of the population needs assistance in daily living, which is very often provided by women on a voluntary basis. Sometimes the need of continuous assistance may induce the carer to leave work.

As family carers are mainly women over 50, whose employment rates still fall short of EU targets, improving their employment options will require new policies and resources to enable them to reconcile work and family life and promote intergenerational solidarity within families

Women are often and increasingly over-represented among the isolated elderly, as a consequence of rising divorce rates and shorter life-expectancy of men. Widows and lone elderly women in general are at a higher risk of poverty, isolation and social exclusion.

According to the OECD, informal care-givers can be divided into three categories. The first includes relatives, friends or volunteers that do not receive any form of compensation for their engagement. The second category includes informal care-givers that receive cash benefits/allowance as part of cash benefit programmes and consumer-choice programmes. They are usually relatives or friends. The last category includes undeclared/illegal informal care-givers. They are care-givers who receive some form of payments by care recipients but without any form of employment contract. In order to avoid penalisation of older women in their pension entitlement for providing unpaid care and thus leaving the labour market,

several options could be considered. Given the relevance of informal care in many societies and women's predominance as care-givers, measures supporting informal carers may exert a positive gender impact in terms of women's labour inclusion and reconciliation between market work and caring responsibilities. Support for informal care-givers may include information and training, tax benefits and payments, regulations of businesses or initiatives by private organisations to facilitate combining work and care-giving. The policy initiatives supporting both an equitable access to LTC and the work of informal care-givers include: care leave, pension credits, in-kind and in-cash benefits and allowances, and flexible working time. The provision of long-term care service may support women in retaining their work and may exert a relevant gender impact in terms of quality of life and social inclusion, both for the carer and for the recipient of the care. Furthermore, in a few Member States, parental leave is extended to grandparents. However, such initiatives are still exceptional.

Health issues of older women

There are diseases that more probably effect women than men. Therefore a gender specific approach should help. There are a number of areas which would greatly benefit from stimulation of gender specific research and where the outcome would benefit women's health. Ageing women are particularly vulnerable to age-related diseases, especially breast cancer, memory disorders, (e.g. dementia and Alzheimer's), osteoporosis and rheumatoid arthritis. According to the WHO 40% of all women over 50 will suffer an osteoporotic fracture. Furthermore, complication related to coronary vascular diseases in the presence of diabetes or hypertension is more common in women than in men.

Prevention is of crucial importance. In some Member States gender specific screening programmes are already available, but not in all.

Breast cancer prevention programmes are in some Member States free of charge for women aged 50-69 and part of the statutory health scheme. What's more, in some Member States, women from this age group are personally invited in writing for mammographic screening every two years.

Most policies and programmes are gender-blind, they do not explicitly target older women but rather aim at the social inclusion of more generic 'vulnerable groups'.

Multiple discrimination affects older women who are not only discriminated on the basis of their age, gender and health status, but, if belonging to vulnerable groups, also on other counts. Moreover, the current economic crisis has significant consequences on older women already suffering discrimination for matters of health or disability, and on their access to basic services, especially health care and long-term care services, due to current or future budget cuts.

Finally, proper management of the population's ageing process and the inevitable changes in society may contribute to sounder economic and social policy. It is necessary to overcome the dominant political rhetoric on population ageing seen as a social and economic burden for society. It is crucial to integrate a gender and age dimension into all active ageing strategies at all governance level.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	13.7.2011
Result of final vote	+: 26 -: 1 0: 3
Members present for the final vote	Regina Bastos, Edit Bauer, Marije Cornelissen, Silvia Costa, Edite Estrela, Ilda Figueiredo, Zita Gurmai, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Nicole Kiil-Nielsen, Astrid Lulling, Barbara Matera, Angelika Niebler, Siiri Oviir, Antonyia Parvanova, Nicole Sinclair, Joanna Katarzyna Skrzydlewska, Eva-Britt Svensson, Britta Thomsen, Marina Yannakoudakis, Anna Záborská
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Christa Kläß, Mojca Kleva, Mariya Nedelcheva, Norica Nicolai, Chrysoula Paliadeli, Antigoni Papadopoulou, Sirpa Pietikäinen
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Jacek Włosowicz