

Amendment 1

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on behalf of the ECR Group

Report**A9-0194/2021****Beata Szydło**

Old continent growing older – possibilities and challenges related to ageing policy post-2020 (2020/2008(INI))

Motion for a resolution (Rule 181(3) of the Rules of Procedure) replacing non-legislative motion for a resolution A9-0194/2021**European Parliament resolution on an old continent growing older – possibilities and challenges related to ageing policy post-2020**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Europe’s ageing population is a demographic phenomenon which involves a decrease both in fertility and mortality rates and a higher life expectancy;
- B. whereas the population of the EU is decreasing; whereas in 1960, EU residents made up 13.5 % of the global population, while in 2018 they accounted for 6.9 % and by 2070 are expected to account for around 4 %¹; whereas this situation is related to, among other factors, a fall in birth rates in the EU vis-à-vis other regions in the world, which leads to population ageing with an effect on the age composition and relative shares of different age groups and contributes to the inversion of the demographic pyramid; whereas the demographic transition is a universal phenomenon and the EU’s decreasing share of the world’s population reflects an earlier start in this global process²; whereas the active participation of older people in society should not be underestimated; whereas more than 20 % of those aged between 65 and 74 and around 15 % of those aged 75 or over participate in formal and/or informal voluntary activities³;
- C. whereas the current demographic situation has a severe impact on the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the EU; whereas it is important for the EU to mainstream demographic aspects into all of its policies; whereas the working-age population (people aged between 15 and 64) is expected to decrease significantly from 333 million in 2016 to 292 million in 2070; whereas by 2100, people aged 80 and over are projected to account for 14.6 % of the population⁴;
- D. whereas longevity is a remarkable collective achievement underpinned by significant

¹ Commission report of 17 June 2020 on the impact of demographic change (COM(2020)0241).

² UN, *Changing population age structures and sustainable development: a concise report*, 2017.

³ Eurostat, ‘Ageing Europe – statistics on social life and opinions’, data extracted in July 2020.

⁴ Eurostat, ‘Population structure and ageing’, data extracted in August 2020.

progress in economic and social development and in health, which has considerably improved quality of life and contributed to a 10-year increase in the average life expectancy of men and women over the last 50 years; whereas life expectancy is expected to rise from 78.3 to 86.1 years for men and 83.7 to 90.3 years for women between 2016 and 2070; whereas the increase in average life expectancy must be viewed, in all circumstances, as a factor in the advancement of civilisation and never as a constraint; whereas data shows that in 2018, the estimated number of healthy life years was 64.2 for women and 63.7 for men⁵; whereas, however, the discrepancy between life expectancy and healthy life years is worrisome and should be urgently addressed;

- E. whereas a longer, healthier life is valuable for both individuals and societies, creating new opportunities for the participation and inclusion of older people in economic and social life; whereas social engagement at an older age contributes, in turn, to individual health and well-being; whereas there is a correlation between longevity and social status; whereas participation in a range of social activities such as volunteering, sport and hobbies, as well as regular contact with family and friends, tend to have a positive impact on the overall health of older people and prevent their isolation;
- F. whereas demographic change could have an impact on the EU's economic and social sustainability in the medium and long term; whereas access to quality public services is a decisive factor in quality of life; whereas the economic and social impact of demographic change underlines the need to strengthen social security and healthcare systems;
- G. whereas there is research that points to the correlation between fertility rates and policies that encourage better job opportunities, decent working and living conditions, flexible working arrangements, decent family support, financial support during maternity, paternity and parental leave, quality childcare from the early years on, and more equal distribution of care responsibilities between men and women;
- H. whereas the rates of part-time employment are higher for women (31.3 %) than for men (8.7 %), including among the older population (49.8 % of older men compared to 64.1 % of older women); whereas in 2018, the number of usual working hours in the EU-28 averaged 30.3 hours per week for men aged between 65 and 74 and 24.1 hours per week for women of the same age, and whereas men are expected to be part of the labour force for 38.6 years, while the corresponding figure for women is 33.7 years⁶;
- I. whereas women aged between 55 and 64 have a lower employment rate than men (52.4 % for women compared to 65.4 % for men), and are the most likely providers of informal care services in the home⁷;
- J. whereas the total number of people of working age (15-64) will fall by 20.8 million in the EU between 2005 and 2030 as the baby boomer generation retires, resulting in a greater burden on the Member States' healthcare and pension systems; whereas the total

⁵ Commission staff working document of 17 June 2020 accompanying its report on the impact of demographic change (SWD(2020)0109), p. 7.

⁶ Eurostat, *Ageing Europe: Looking at the lives of older people in the EU*, 2019.

⁷ Eurostat, *Ageing Europe: Looking at the lives of older people in the EU*, 2019.

age-dependency ratio is expected to reach 57 % by 2100, almost double that of 2019 (31 %);

- K. whereas the median age in the EU-28 has risen from 38.3 years in 2001 to 43.1 years in 2018⁸; whereas in 2018, 19 % of EU citizens were 65 years old or older, and their needs should be taken into account in the political decision-making process at Union, national and regional level;
- L. whereas older people are particularly exposed to the phenomena of social exclusion and isolation; whereas an increasing number of adults in the EU are experiencing social isolation (75 million people – 18 % of the population); whereas the risk of social isolation is highest among older people, while the feeling of loneliness is most significant in the 26-45 age bracket⁹;
- M. whereas COVID-19 also has a major impact on demography; whereas many older people have died and, as some studies suggest, the coronavirus has had a considerable impact on EU population trends, such as a reduction in life expectancy and family planning;
- N. whereas demographic change does not have a uniform impact on all countries and regions, but has a bigger impact on regions that are already lagging behind, aggravating existing territorial and social inequalities; whereas rural, peripheral and outermost regions, including islands, are most affected by depopulation, with mainly young people and women leaving those areas, resulting in an increasing share of older people living there, which could increase the risk of social isolation;
- O. whereas according to the European Spatial Planning Observation Network, the population in European agglomerations will increase by 24.1 million by 2050, accounting for almost half of the total EU population, while the rural population will decrease by 7.9 million people;
- P. whereas older people are more likely to experience limited access to the internet as well as lacking awareness and knowledge about existing and emerging technologies; whereas only 35 % of people aged 55-74 possess basic digital skills, compared to 82 % of those aged 16-24¹⁰ and, as a consequence, older people are more vulnerable to exclusion, including digital exclusion; whereas both the social and the digital exclusion of older people have been exacerbated by the lockdown and social measures taken by the Member States in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; whereas barrier-free and user-friendly technologies can help to overcome these challenges; whereas the Council addressed this problem in 2020 and issued conclusions on the human rights, participation and well-being of older persons in the era of digitalisation;
- Q. whereas the population fell by up to 15 % in some regions of the EU between 1998 and 2018 due to rapid depopulation and population ageing; whereas rapid demographic change generates disproportionately high adjustment costs; whereas almost two thirds of

⁸ European Parliamentary Research Service, *Demographic outlook of the European Union*, March 2020, p. 3.

⁹ EU Science Hub: the Commission's science and knowledge service, 'How lonely are Europeans?', 12 June 2019.

¹⁰ European Commission, *The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2020*, p. 52.

regions that experience a rapidly shrinking population have a low GDP per capita¹¹; whereas population ageing is causing a shrinking working-age population and may result in the decline of municipalities and villages throughout the EU; whereas decisions to merge municipalities and villages or to incorporate them into other municipalities or cities may also result in municipalities and villages disappearing altogether;

- R. whereas particular attention should be paid to the very old, in order, where necessary, to help people who have lost their independence and prevent them from being isolated;
- S. whereas it is necessary to promote an increase in birth rates in order to rebalance the demographic pyramid;

Health and care

- T. whereas due account should always be taken of the ethical risks arising from the use of technology in health;
- U. whereas the WHO defines healthy ageing as the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age; whereas there is a correlation between perceived health and income; whereas in 2017 less than one third (32.4 %) of older people in the first income quintile (20 % of the population with the lowest incomes) perceived their health as good or very good, compared to 54.7 % of older people belonging to the 20 % of the population with the highest incomes¹²; whereas the results of the European Health Interview Survey show that a majority of older people were found to have chronic illnesses or complaints, and only one in nine declared the absence of such problems, and whereas many disabilities emerge or become more pronounced at an older age; whereas almost half of older people in the EU (aged 65 and over) have reported difficulties with at least one personal activity or domestic activity¹³; whereas about a quarter of the EU population experienced long-standing limitations due to health problems in 2018¹⁴; whereas approximately 15 % of adults aged 60 and over have a mental disorder;
- V. whereas in most developed countries, older people are considered to be those aged 65 and over; whereas the 65+ age group is very heterogeneous, with significant differences in health, lifestyle, status, and living and social conditions; whereas generalisations should therefore be avoided; whereas focusing on the age of 65 as the upper age limit for data collection often does not correspond to the reality of older people's economic and social activities, making for incomplete and inaccurate data; whereas as a result, many older people are absent from many statistics and data-gathering exercises as it is common not to collect statistics for persons over 65; whereas this is no longer adequate in the light of the growing share of the population living to an older age;
- W. whereas the number of people who are dependent on the assistance of others or have health and long-term care needs increases with age; whereas the share of individuals in

¹¹ Commission staff working document of 17 June 2020 accompanying its report on the impact of demographic change (SWD(2020)0109), p. 42.

¹² Eurostat, *Ageing Europe: Looking at the lives of older people in the EU*, 2019, p. 53.

¹³ Eurostat, 'Disability statistics – elderly needs for help or assistance', data extracted in June 2019.

¹⁴ Eurostat, 'Functional and activity limitations statistics', data extracted in December 2020.

need of such services is higher in those aged 80 or over; whereas dependence is exacerbated by ageing, but is also affected by other elements, such as socio-economic and environmental factors as well as educational attainment, interpersonal relations and personal well-being; whereas the needs for care and support are diverse and the appropriate means to ensure autonomy and independence differ;

- X. whereas informal and formal care systems are under pressure from demographic change, compounded by shortages of formal care workers; whereas Eurofound research shows the need to provide access to home or community care for people with minor long-term care needs, not only to support informal carers and to improve quality of life for care receivers, but also to quickly spot and respond to emerging needs;
- Y. whereas some older people cannot benefit from active ageing measures and policies due to various factors such as their place of residence, the state of their health, a lack of motivation, and the lack of habit of or opportunities for regular physical, mental, cultural or social activity and recreation; whereas older people may also face difficulties in accessing sports, culture and physical rehabilitation centres and have to contend with financial constraints or the lack or inadequacy of activities adapted to their individual psychophysical conditions; whereas an effective active ageing strategy should have a positive impact on older people, society and the economy as a whole;
- Z. whereas creating conditions for healthy ageing and self-reliance for women and men through a comprehensive approach to old age as a life stage, as well as adapting housing and local environments in a way that allows older people to live in their own home and its surroundings for as long as possible, will bring systemic and individual benefits;
- AA. whereas care and support should aim to maintain the autonomy, independence and well-being of older people; whereas the idea of ageing in place in one's community in an age-friendly environment is of key importance to urban planning and enhancing the transition from institutional care to community-based services; whereas, moreover, the possibilities for maintaining autonomy and independence depend on conditions such as age-friendly environments, accessibility and the affordability of services, including quality housing and community-based care; whereas demographic change requires suitable responses to specific health needs and for support services and facilities;
- AB. whereas the accumulation of health risks, injuries and chronic illnesses throughout one's life increases the risk of disability; whereas older people consult general practitioners and medical specialists more often, but also report greater difficulties in accessing medical services in some Member States than the average population due to, *inter alia*, the price of medical services, long distances and long waiting lists¹⁵; whereas investment in the care economy is essential to ensure a decent life for all those in need of care and carers; whereas people in older age groups are more vulnerable and thus susceptible to disease and to complications and fatalities linked to different diseases, including COVID-19; whereas COVID-19 has highlighted the need for more robust health systems and more intensive care capacity; whereas in this context, access to medical treatment and the provision of personal protective equipment in long-term care facilities should be ensured as a matter of urgency;

¹⁵ Eurostat, *Ageing Europe: Looking at the lives of older people in the EU*, 2019, p. 70.

- AC. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that accessible and high-quality public services and care services are an effective response to the population's needs, including those of older people who, in a number of circumstances during the pandemic, have experienced and continue to experience age discrimination in accessing medical and care services, including obstacles to medical treatment in general; whereas the COVID-19 pandemic once more shed light on the lack of adequate housing, quality care facilities and sufficient care and support services; whereas the highest shares of COVID-19 infections and deaths in the EU relate to nursing and care homes, residential services for older people and persons with disabilities, and other social services¹⁶; whereas many older people have died during the pandemic as a result of many intensive care units being overwhelmed; whereas in some cases, one of the main criteria for the decision on the availability of intensive care treatment was the age of the patient; whereas many older people have faced obstacles in accessing medical treatment other than for COVID-19 and whereas care services in general have been reduced or halted altogether during the pandemic;
- AD. whereas a 2019 Eurobarometer survey shows that 40 % of people in the EU feel discriminated against on the grounds of age; whereas ageism is present at different levels and manifests itself in different forms, including in individual approaches and the perception of oneself and in relations between generations; whereas ageism has been shown to reduce health and life expectancy and hinder full participation in social, cultural and civil life, and can lead to restrictions on older people's access to services or active participation in the labour market both at national and EU level and services in the workplace, giving rise to marginalisation and social exclusion; whereas according to the most recent European Working Conditions Survey, age discrimination was the most common form of discrimination in the workplace; whereas other forms of discrimination highlighted by older people include access to financial products and services, healthcare, education, training and leisure¹⁷; whereas successfully combating age discrimination and age stereotypes including in the labour market is essential for active ageing, for engendering more solidarity between generations, and for making use of the experience acquired by older workers; whereas strengthening equal access to goods and services is also essential in this regard;
- AE. whereas according to the WHO, active ageing is the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age, allowing people to realise their potential for well-being throughout their lives and to participate in society according to their needs, desires and capabilities, while providing them with adequate protection, security and care when they need assistance;
- AF. whereas older people sometimes fall victim to violence, abuse and other worrying acts, such as fraud and unfair business practices, deprivation of legal capacity and the means to manage their own affairs; whereas the phenomenon of abuse against older people should be better covered by data and research on its incidence and ways to prevent it; whereas efforts to produce more comprehensive data on mistreatment of older people

¹⁶ European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control et al., 'High impact of COVID-19 in long-term care facilities, suggestion for monitoring in the EU/EEA', *Eurosurveillance*, Vol 25, Issue 22, 4 June 2020.

¹⁷ European Agency for Fundamental Rights, bulletins on the fundamental rights implications of the Coronavirus pandemic in the EU: No 3 of June 2020 focusing on older people and No 6 of 30 November 2020 focusing on social rights.

are necessary;

- AG. whereas according to a 2012 Eurobarometer survey, 60 % of people in the EU were against raising the statutory retirement age while 61 % of people in the EU were of the opinion that everyone should be able to continue working beyond the statutory retirement age; whereas depending on their financial needs, almost half of workers aged 50 or over would prefer to work fewer hours, while a significant proportion of retired people would prefer to work at least a few hours per week¹⁸; whereas working past retirement age is associated with workplace policies supporting employability and workers staying in employment longer if they wish to do so; whereas the hiring rates of older workers who are not in employment are, however, extremely low and whereas older workers are at high risk of becoming long-term unemployed; whereas the poverty and social exclusion rates for persons aged between 55 and 64 are higher than the EU average for all ages; whereas 56 % of people in the EU are worried that their income in old age will not be sufficient¹⁹; whereas the likelihood of finding a new job decreases with age, partly on account of structural barriers including age discrimination²⁰; whereas the sense of purpose in life generally declines after the age of 50, but remains much stronger for individuals who continue to work after retirement or have childcare or long-term care responsibilities²¹; whereas combating unemployment among older workers in the EU remains very important;
- AH. whereas appropriate working and employment conditions, including improved occupational health and safety, a better work-life balance, an age-appropriate working environment, lower quantitative demands and working time autonomy, may enable and encourage older people to stay in the labour market if they wish to do so;
- AI. whereas specific attention needs to be paid to the needs of workers in very physically or psychologically demanding jobs; whereas this issue can be addressed through occupational health and safety strategies, policies supporting work-life balance, access to and take-up of education and training opportunities at work or outside of it, support for intergenerational exchanges in workplaces and the option to retire progressively, which will bring both individual and societal benefits; whereas employers are often reluctant to offer adequate training to older workers; whereas lifelong learning contributes to active ageing and allows people to work and fully participate in society; whereas the health and performance of older workers are not determined by their age, but by a series of closely related factors, such as individual lifestyle and exposure to hazards in the workplace²²; whereas quality jobs as well as safe and healthy workplaces are not only important for the well-being of workers, but also for the competitiveness of companies and the sustainability of welfare systems;
- AJ. whereas regions with high unemployment rates are characterised by higher ageing rates and a shrinking population;

¹⁸ Eurofound article of 19 May 2021 entitled 'Retirement'.

¹⁹ Eurofound, European Quality of Life Survey 2016, p. 79.

²⁰ Eurofound, European Quality of Life Survey 2016, p. 77.

²¹ Eurofound, European Quality of Life Survey 2016, p. 26.

²² European Agency for Safety and Health at Work report of 4 October 2016 entitled 'The ageing workforce: Implications for occupational safety and health – A research review'.

- AK. whereas programmes, projects and actions that promote active ageing strategies should be reflected in all policy fields and whereas the Member States should make use of all available EU instruments, such as the European Structural and Investment Funds, in particular the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the Connecting Europe Facility, to tackle demographic challenges; whereas EU funds facilitate the provision of essential infrastructure;
- AL. whereas initiatives such as the Access City Award encourage the adaptation of public spaces to the needs of older people and persons with reduced mobility and have a positive effect on their independence; whereas such initiatives not only improve the quality of their lives, ensure their social inclusion and guarantee their equal enjoyment of fundamental rights, but can also have a positive economic effect;
- AM. whereas the number of single-person households has increased by 19 % since 2010; whereas in 2019, 40 % of women in the EU aged 65 or over lived alone, which is more than double the share of men living alone; whereas in many Member States, housing for older people and persons with disabilities, chronic diseases and functional limitations is inadequate due to accessibility problems, low-quality standards or the high cost of living and housing; whereas dwellings should be affordable, accessible, safe and comfortable, all of which are particularly important factors, not only for older people; whereas many older people are less likely to renovate their homes if they are not owners;
- AN. whereas human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and belong to all people and to all generations, without discrimination on any grounds; whereas older people, including persons with disabilities, are valuable to society and therefore should participate in society to the fullest extent and live their lives with dignity and as independently as possible; whereas solidarity between generations should guide the recovery of the EU with a view to achieving a fairer, more inclusive and more resilient society that leaves no one behind;
- AO. whereas all Member States and the EU are parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and thus legally bound to guarantee individual autonomy, non-discrimination, full and effective participation in society and equal opportunities and accessibility; whereas there are over 80 million persons with disabilities in the European Union, and whereas most disabilities are acquired with age; whereas older persons with disabilities are at higher risk of poverty and discrimination²³; whereas policies on ageing must ensure the protection and social inclusion of persons with disabilities, as well as their access to the labour market and services; whereas mobility is key to fostering independent living and autonomy; whereas ensuring a fully accessible transport chain from door to door is critical;
- AP. whereas older people in rural or remote areas may face higher age-related risks, including poverty, poorer access to quality healthcare and services, less social support or fewer opportunities for social interaction and a lack of access to public transport services;

²³ Commission report of 17 June 2020 on the impact of demographic change (COM(2020)0241), p. 22.

Combating discrimination against older people

1. Stresses that valuing older people and tackling discrimination against them is only possible through social, cultural and economic inclusion policies which focus on providing fair pensions that ensure a good quality of life; stresses, therefore, the importance of public social security systems that are distributive and based on contributive solidarity between generations;
2. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen their efforts to combat all forms of discrimination against older people, especially in the areas of employment, access to financial products and services, healthcare, housing, promoting autonomy, education, training and leisure activities; calls, furthermore, on the Commission and the Member States to promote a positive perception of old age in society and the social inclusion of older people by stimulating age-friendly environments in the EU through appropriate measures, and to support the exchange of good practices at all governance levels and strengthen their support for the silver economy in the EU;
3. Stresses that an extension of the legal retirement age does not represent an adequate tool for addressing and resolving the current economic and social crisis, as it could result in further deteriorating the fundamental rights of older workers;
4. Calls on the Commission and the Council to establish a Year of Intergenerational Solidarity and Active Ageing complementing and building on the aims and spirit of the European Day of Solidarity between Generations and the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, in order to raise awareness about the problems older people face and promote strategies to mitigate them, as well as to eliminate stereotypes and prejudice, strengthen families and the links and solidarity between the generations, and counteract social exclusion; stresses the importance of this initiative in not only the context of demographic change, but also the COVID-19 pandemic, which has hit vulnerable groups, including older people and their carers, particularly hard; also invites the Member States to consult with academic experts and civil society organisations when addressing demographic challenges; calls on the Commission and the Council to swiftly implement the Council conclusions on the human rights, participation and well-being of older persons in the era of digitalisation, including the creation of a ‘platform for participation and volunteering after working life’ and the promotion of intergenerational exchanges and ties;
5. Welcomes the Commission’s Green Paper of 27 January 2021 entitled ‘Ageing: Fostering solidarity and responsibility between generations’ (COM(2021)0050); calls on the Commission to prepare an EU action plan on demographic change and solidarity between generations, taking into account the diversity and complexity of the situation in specific age groups as well as differences in the Member States;

Health and long-term care for older people

6. Underlines the paramount importance of fully protecting the right to care and support for older people; calls on the Member States to ensure equal access to health and care services, including at home, as well as residential or community-based long-term care and palliative care, without discrimination on any grounds; stresses that these health and care services should be adapted to individual needs and promote well-being, autonomy,

independence and community inclusion;

7. Points out the importance of flexible forms of work in allowing women and men to reconcile work and family life, and the need for awareness-raising campaigns on the equal division of domestic work and care and nursing, and better investment in care infrastructure;
8. Believes that every person should have the right to choose quality care services that are suitable for them and their family; believes that the approach to the development of care services should take into account all categories of users and their differences and the wide range of preferences for the types of care services they require; notes that care services should be developed so as to enhance the continuity of care, preventive healthcare, rehabilitation and independent living;
9. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to further explore user-friendly, safe and accessible assistive digital technologies, telecare and telemedicine, especially in regions affected by demographic decline and remote regions; underlines that the use of these technologies should be fully consistent with the existing data protection framework, while ethical issues pertaining to the use of technology in health should always be duly taken into account; encourages the Member States to set up day-care centres for older people close to schools and nurseries, which could foster intergenerational ties;
10. Calls on the Member States to better acknowledge the value of informal care, to improve social protection and the various forms of support for informal carers, to provide professional support, training and peer counselling for informal carers, and to introduce, in close cooperation with social partners, different forms of periodic relief for family members caring for older people, especially those needing respite care and day-care services, and support services including flexible working arrangements; encourages the Member States to put forward targeted strategies to help informal carers and recognise their contribution to care for older people, and to put forward proposals for adequate relief services; emphasises that providing informal care should be a choice and that formal care services should be promoted;
11. Encourages the Member States to develop volunteering and assistance for older people, as this has a special role to play in crisis situations, as demonstrated by the coronavirus pandemic;
12. Calls on the Member States to ensure access to rehabilitation and reintegration services with a view to supporting older workers to return to the labour market after health-related career breaks if they wish to do so, since active ageing is key to health;
13. Stresses that the COVID-19 outbreak has served as evidence of how essential it is for Member States to have robust, inclusive and crisis-proof health systems; calls on the Member States to ensure there are a sufficient number of professionals in the field of health and care services and to ensure access to geriatric medicine throughout the EU; calls on the Member States to ensure adequate working and employment conditions in medical and care occupations and to invest in education and training as a means of guaranteeing the quality of care provided; calls for the creation of incentives to take up the profession of carer for older people;

Active ageing

14. Stresses that the creation and implementation of age-appropriate lifelong learning opportunities is a vital and indispensable element for enhancing social and economic sustainability and personal welfare; calls on the Member States to invest in skills and education and to develop formal, non-formal and informal educational, training and lifelong learning projects, as well as opportunities for better integration for older people, including online education, whether they are still part of the labour market or are already retired;
15. Emphasises, in this context, the need to strengthen the digital skills of older people, which can help them not only to benefit from online education, but also improve their access to healthcare and other digital services; calls for accessible and affordable digital skills programmes catered to the needs of older people; calls on the Commission to take specific actions targeting older people; calls, furthermore, on the Commission and the Member States to support upskilling and reskilling initiatives, in particular for vulnerable groups, in order to help people find a quality job and in order to meet the needs of the labour market, counter the digital gap and ensure that these persons effectively adapt and benefit from innovative management and working methods and digital solutions, such as teleworking;
16. Calls on the Member States to use REACT-EU funds to tackle demographic change²⁴; calls on the Member States to use the ESF+ and ERDF funds to support the creation of quality jobs, promote a better work-life balance and provide job opportunities in regions at risk of depopulation; stresses the importance of counselling services, lifelong learning and programmes for the reskilling and upskilling of workers at all ages;
17. Welcomes the Commission's proposal to launch a programme for 'digital volunteers'²⁵ to enable young qualified people and experienced senior citizens to share their digital skills with traditional businesses; encourages the Member States to develop volunteering and mentoring to transfer knowledge between generations, in order to counteract social exclusion and allow the sharing of their skills and experience, encourage the upgrading of the skills of younger and older workers and preserve traditional crafts as part of European heritage;
18. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to bridge the digital divide and further explore the possibilities for social inclusion and integration into the labour market of older people of working age, particularly those who are housebound, by using the internet, other information technologies and artificial intelligence for cultural, entertainment, education, work, communication and medical purposes, including telecare and telemedicine in a safe manner, and ensuring the highest level of protection of personal data, while acknowledging the importance of direct personal contact and a dignified and human-centric approach; calls in particular for strategies to improve digital skills, connectivity and access to devices in long-term care settings;
19. Notes that improving the connectivity and accessibility of services in rural and remote

²⁴ Commission report of 17 June 2020 on the impact of demographic change (COM(2020)0241), pp. 22-23.

²⁵ Commission communication of 10 March 2020 on an SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe (COM(2020)0103).

areas is crucial to addressing the depopulation of these regions and the social and digital exclusion of the older population living there; calls, therefore, on the Member States to recognise the significance of rural and remote areas in all their diversity, and to develop their potential through stimulating investments in the local economy, fostering entrepreneurship and improving their infrastructure;

20. Underlines the essential impact constantly evolving digital technologies have on people's daily lives, and thus stresses the need for high-speed internet and vital and up-to-date technological equipment in schools, hospitals and all other relevant public services facilities, including effective e-governance; considers the possibilities created by lifelong learning, in combination with digitalisation, essential to provide the ageing population in rural and remote areas with various opportunities, including supplementary income; calls, therefore, on the Commission and the Member States to support educational and training programmes that help the ageing population to develop skills and gain knowledge in areas such as e-commerce, online marketing and ICT; calls on the Member States to take into account the specific situation of older workers in the labour market through measures such as individualised training and optimised working hours; calls on the Member States to ensure that all households have access to high-speed internet and digital equipment and to advance the acquisition of digital skills, especially for vulnerable groups;
21. Calls on the Commission to support Member States in the increasing use of the structural funds for investment in public childcare and care for older and dependent people;
22. Calls on the Member States to support the functioning and development of older people's organisations and other forms of social participation; calls on the Commission and the Member States to involve organisations representing and safeguarding the interests of older people in making decisions which affect them;
23. Underlines that the emerging silver economy could turn into one of the main economic drivers, particularly in rural areas, and could provide opportunities for the health and long-term care sectors to offer high-quality care in a more efficient way; calls on the Commission and the Member States to take into account the potential of the silver economy in EU and national strategies and to promote it more vigorously, including in tourism and cultural exchanges geared towards older people;

Special policies and research

24. Calls on the Member States to use EU funds and private investments combined with national and local investments to provide adequate, safe and accessible housing and to adapt buildings to the needs of older, vulnerable and disadvantaged people; stresses that buildings should have accessibility features; stresses that safe housing is housing where the possibility of dangers has been reduced and where responding to danger is made easier; recalls that accessible housing should go hand in hand with adequate infrastructure;
25. Underlines the indispensable role regional and local authorities have in addressing the ever-deepening demographic issues in rural and remote areas in a meaningful and sustainable way;

26. Calls on the Member States to promote initiatives to strengthen intergenerational bonds and to support older people who, for health or financial reasons, have to leave their homes to find affordable housing that meets their needs;
27. Emphasises that sheltered and supported housing can be conducive to the deinstitutionalisation of care; calls on the Member States to explore the possibilities to promote sheltered, supported and intergenerational housing, as well as housing adaptations based on quality criteria;
28. Encourages the Member States to carry out information and education campaigns and actions dedicated to older people in the field of road safety, showing the impact of physiological changes and psychomotor skills on the ability to move around on the road, thus improving safety for all road users;
29. Encourages the Member States to increase spending from the ESF+, the ERDF and the Just Transition Fund for the training and retraining of older workers, ensuring equal access to public services, with particular emphasis being placed on encouraging companies to employ older workers and adapting public infrastructure, including transport, and public spaces to the needs of older people; invites the Member States to promote investments in public services in rural areas with the aid of structural funds, which would attract the younger generation and increase the well-being of older people living in these areas; calls for greater use of European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development funds to counteract the isolation and social exclusion of older people in rural and disadvantaged areas, with a special focus on areas at risk of depopulation; invites the Member States to take advantage of the possibilities offered by Next Generation EU in that respect;
30. Underlines the importance of adequate, reliable and comparable data as a basis of policies and measures for tackling demographic challenges; calls on the Commission to revise the EU statistical framework by increasing the upper age limit for the collection of data, ensuring the inclusion of persons living in institutions and providing disaggregated data by gender and age, with full respect for privacy and fundamental rights standards; calls on the Commission and the Member States to collect more data and to step up their support for the development of research into healthy ageing and old-age related diseases and the living conditions of older people;
31. Stresses that human life is a supreme value that takes precedence over all ideological or partisan circumstances or interests; emphasises that the key concept to be upheld in a democratic society based on the rule of law should be that of the individual as a human being and the defence of individuals' lives and dignity; underlines the value of the family as a natural institution which generates life and ensures optimal development and care for individuals at all stages of their lives and in each of their personal spheres: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual;
32. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to focus their actions on increasing the healthy life years of older people; underlines, in this respect, the importance of programmes for lifelong health promotion and education, disease prevention and regular examination and to undertake new initiatives such as better disease prevention policies and more effective healthcare programmes to stimulate the process of healthy ageing;

33. Calls on the Member States to encourage intergenerational exchange by, among other endeavours, promoting voluntary work by younger people for older people, and to foster and finance intergenerational centres, as these can be crucial for fighting age discrimination and ensuring the social inclusion of older people; encourages the Member States to set up community care centres and volunteering and lifelong learning opportunities targeting older people close to schools and nurseries, and to work to foster intergenerational ties by encouraging exchanges between these services; urges the Member States and the Commission to promote programmes, projects and actions that further the social, cultural and political participation of older people;
34. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote and support an inclusive labour market and societies that allow for equal participation and draw on the skills and talents of all; calls on the Member States to develop employability and career management strategies to prepare for an ageing workforce and frequent and profound transformations in labour markets; underlines that such strategies should include the promotion of education, training and lifelong learning for persons of all ages, healthy workplaces that provide reasonable accommodation for employees with health difficulties or disabilities, a better work-life balance, and the promotion of intergenerational exchanges in the workplace;
35. Calls on the Member States to improve the access to work of people aged 60+ for those who want to; stresses the importance of encouraging employment opportunities for people that have already reached the statutory retirement age and wish to remain or become active, not only with a view to generating additional income but also as a means to tackle social exclusion; encourages, moreover, incentives for volunteering and mentoring to transfer knowledge between generations; underlines that such measures and activities should take into consideration the situation of all people actively searching for employment;
36. Stresses that investment in care services is essential as it will not only increase women's employment rates, providing job opportunities in the formal economy for previously informal carers and promoting a work-life balance for women, but also improve the living conditions of older people through investment in long-term care facilities, measures to improve mental health and combat isolation, and measures to prevent and combat violence against older women, as well as investing in people's health and education, to ensure that they stay active and in good health as they grow older; stresses the importance of ensuring that care for older people remains a national competence;
37. Calls on the Member States to devote greater attention to older people, who are particularly vulnerable to viral infections, including COVID-19; calls on the Commission and the Member States to combat the isolation, neglect and social exclusion experienced by older people during the COVID-19 pandemic by promoting awareness-raising campaigns, conducting research, facilitating exchanges of views, and combining European Structural and Investment Funds;
38. Highlights that new technologies and innovative methods could prove to be useful to reduce the costs of services of general interest, while retaining the standard of living and quality of services in remote and sparsely populated areas; encourages the Member States and the relevant regional and local authorities to invest in unconventional and

innovative measures designed to provide essential services for the population and create a suitable environment to attract people to return and reverse depopulation;

39. Calls on the Member States to enhance their exchange of best practices on the creation of suitable demographic policies and initiatives to harness the possibilities of and address the challenges posed by the EU's ageing population;

Support for rural and family farming

40. Notes that an ageing population, particularly in agricultural and rural areas, is an unavoidable trend that must be taken into account when designing economic and social policies; considers that the issue of an ageing population requires a multidimensional approach, and stresses the importance of promoting wider complementarity and synergy between policy areas and support instruments;
41. Considers that family workers still represent the vast majority of agricultural labour in Europe, but notes that this type of labour has been steadily declining for years and is expected to decline further in the near future; stresses that the unstoppable rural exodus from certain parts of the Union will lead to rural areas facing economic, social and environmental problems that need more ambitious and coordinated policies;
42. Recalls the specific nature of family farming, which blends agricultural activity and family life, with older farmers remaining active beyond the age of retirement;
43. Recognises the potential of older people, including farmers, to become the driving force of a vibrant silver economy in rural areas based on social innovation, inclusive rural communities and a healthier living environment; calls on the Commission to carefully study this potential when building its long-term vision for rural areas and active ageing;
44. Believes that farm partnerships between older and younger generations are key to deepening intergenerational solidarity, knowledge transfer and mutual learning, which is particularly important for the uptake of new technologies and digital skills in farming;
45. Emphasises that inequalities in access to land, direct payments and support, both between and within EU countries, are among the issues that need to be addressed in order to halt regional decline, and to encourage older people past retirement age to leave farming and young people to start farming;
46. Notes that an effective mobility system is one of the prerequisites for regional economic development, territorial cohesion and the development of regional potential; points out that it is therefore necessary to provide the requisite funding for the development and maintenance of transport links, which could encourage the older generation to stay in agriculture for longer and attract young people from regional centres to work in the countryside;
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47. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

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