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Answer given by Vice-President Šuica
on behalf of the European Commission
(20.7.2020)

1. In June 2020, the Commission published a report on the impact of demographic change, which will pave the way for a Green Paper on Ageing, launching a broad public consultation and looking into the required policy responses, also in view of the situation after the COVID-19 outbreak.

2. Following a Commission proposal, co-legislators agreed on a new set of measures allowing full flexibility in using European Structural and Investment Funds, for instance combining funds, transferring between regions and allowing 100% financing, to protect lives and livelihoods in response to the coronavirus. On 27 May 2020, the Commission also proposed to complement temporarily this proposal with an emergency European Recovery Instrument ('Next Generation EU') to boost the EU budget¹. These additional funds will contribute to underpin the immediate measures needed to overcome the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on EU citizens.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control published guidance on COVID-19 infection prevention and control in long-term care facilities² and guidance for development of COVID-19 surveillance in long-term care facilities³.

3. In the context of the recent outbreak, the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing and the Active & Assisted Living⁴ Programme are offering digital solutions in support of the elderly⁵.

The European Agenda for Adult Learning⁶ and the Skills Agenda⁷ help elderly people acquire the skills to participate in society.

Finally, the Commission is also looking into the issue of loneliness in its many different facets, in the context of the current pandemic but also beyond, and is considering how best to address this phenomenon.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_940

² https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Infection-prevention-control-for-the-care-of-patients-with-2019-nCoV-healthcare-settings_update-31-March-2020.pdf

³ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19-long-term-care-facilities-surveillance-guidance.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.aal-europe.eu/available-aal-solutions-supporting-older-adults-to-cope-with-the-consequences-of-the-coronavirus-outbreak/>

⁵ For example, in Belgium, social robots have been made available free of charge to residential care centers. The robots help residents to make contact with their family through a video call and help to combat loneliness in a safe way: <https://www.brubotics.eu/news/overview/pepper-is-nieuwste-bewoner-woonzorgcentrum>

⁶ <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-in-the-eu/implementing-the-european-agenda-for-adult-learning>

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223>