Joint AGE-ENAR position paper
The voices of older ethnic and religious minorities and migrants

Raising awareness of their rights to promote their participation in employment, involvement in the community and independent living as a contribution to the European Year 2012 for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations

22 November 2012

Contacts:
Shannon Pfohman - shannon@enar-eu.org
Rachel Buchanan - rachel.buchanan@age-platform.eu
Introduction

To mark the European Equality Summit on 22 November, and in the context of the European Year 2012 for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, this joint position paper from AGE Platform Europe (AGE) and the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) builds on their more theoretical joint policy paper issued in December 2011 which explored how the EY2012 could be used to highlight the situation of older ethnic and religious minorities including older migrants. The previous paper put forward recommendations for concrete policy measures, which AGE and ENAR believe would have a substantive impact in improving the long-term situation of older ethnic and religious minorities including older migrants in the European Union.

This new position paper draws on testimonies and concrete examples of good and bad practices to shed light on the situations on the ground and the policy changes, which AGE and ENAR would like to see achieved for ethnic and religious minorities and older migrants beyond EY2012. AGE and ENAR would like to thank their respective members for providing these examples. The paper is based on their input and reflections with older people from ethnic and religious minority backgrounds and older migrants from a cross-section of Member States. It also highlights a number of good and bad practices under the thematic priority areas of the 2012 European Year - promoting active ageing in employment, promoting active ageing in the community through volunteering and caring, healthy ageing and independent living, and promoting solidarity between generations - in support of the objective of creating an age-friendly EU by 2020.

Issues at stake

The EU is now home to a significant and diverse population of older ethnic and religious minorities and older migrants, many of whom are approaching or have now reached their fifties and sixties, having settled in their countries of destination during their early-working and child-raising years. Migrants across the EU are a very heterogeneous group culturally, socially and economically. This is the result of many factors such as colonial history, labour migration as well as family reunification. Based on Member States’ reports and examples of good practices and respondents’ feedback, older ethnic and religious minorities and migrants tend to be divided roughly into three social categories. The first group is composed of a relatively small, educated elite, aware of their rights and societal responsibilities. The second group is comprised of those aged between 45 and 60, who often run their own businesses and are active in society. The third group represents the largest part of older ethnic and religious minorities and migrants who are unemployed and suffering from ill health. This paper focuses primarily on the issues faced by the third group. They represent a socially diverse group and include migrants who constituted the mass-migration flows to Europe between the 1950s and the 1970s. Many came from depressed rural areas and had relatively little education and few formal or technical job skills at the time of their migration.
Although, many have since acquired skills and qualifications, this group still includes some of the most disadvantaged and socially-excluded older people in the EU. The current crisis amplifies even further the various difficulties faced by these groups in terms of accessing and claiming their rights and, in a broader context, with regard to their integration into society and local communities. Growing populist rhetoric and blaming migrants for economic difficulties makes the need to empower migrant communities of all ages even more urgent.

There is also considerable diversity in the extent of knowledge among migrants about their options and entitlements to the full range of state income, social housing, social service and health-care benefits and services. In some cases, little is known about the challenges facing people in old age – related to having to manage on a reduced income, maintaining social networks, and dealing with health issues and the diseases and disorders of advanced age – or how this is shaped by the decisions and/or experiences of older migrants and those from ethnic and religious minority backgrounds.

**Enjoyment of fundamental rights**

Older migrants and older people from ethnic and religious minorities can have specific concerns and needs that are not always effectively met through the policies and infrastructures in the countries in which they live. Their needs may differ according to their country of origin, reasons for migrating, educational level, and religious and cultural background, individual experiences with integration, and socio-economic status. They may also frequently face particular challenges, which can include an often limited command of the host language, a lower socioeconomic status than they might have held in their country of origin, social exclusion in its various forms, a lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, as well as discrimination and exploitation in the many different areas of their lives. One interview respondent summarised:

> “I consider that older migrants are discriminated (against). They have problems in accessing their fundamental rights. Our organisation helps them to get information. They do not know enough about their rights.”
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> Female, age 65+, Iceland

Regardless of their age, some migrants have problems enjoying their fundamental rights and social interactions with members of the receiving society in part due to language barriers, time constraints, intercultural differences, or even discriminatory tendencies. This is especially the case for those living in isolated situations, in particular if they work at home or in a controlled situation where they are unable to interact with others.
Various initiatives exist to help older ethnic and religious minorities and migrants. For example, in addition to providing migrants with information about their financial rights, NOOM organised a parliamentary lobby about the state pension and cut backs and, together with other migrant organisations and a trade union, lodged a complaint with the Commission for Equal Opportunities concerning a discriminating measure against older migrants.

AGE and ENAR consider it therefore essential when devising future migration, integration and social policies that EU policymakers take adequate consideration of the needs of this diverse and potentially vulnerable societal group. Specific steps must be taken to facilitate their social and economic inclusion. We also maintain that an effective migration policy needs to be supported by a consistent integration policy, which covers all age groups. Moreover, we argue that more inclusive social provisions must be developed. To be successful, the future EU approach to migration must endorse a life course approach that offers all migrants, regardless of age, access to the same social and economic rights as the “native” population of the country in which they reside. Such an approach must promote the full integration of older migrants in society whilst respecting and valuing diversity. It must also respect the right to age in dignity and for individuals to choose the country in which they prefer to spend their retirement.

Including the needs of older ethnic and religious minorities and older migrants within all relevant EU and national policies is crucial. This is particularly important because the population of older people of an ethnic and migrant background in Europe appears to be growing as the native population in many countries shrinks. This necessitates specific solutions that respect and value the many differing cultures, religions and beliefs. For these reasons, the legacy of the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations must promote the active ageing of older ethnic and religious minorities and migrants as well as nurture intergenerational links between them and the broader society. The engagement of the national and local levels to foster inclusion for all and to create a society for all ages, regardless of ethnicity or migrant status, is crucial to achieving this aim.

“There are no restrictions in fundamental rights, but there are a lot of hindrances to get them realised because of lack of information, language problems and negative images.”
Female, 70+, The Netherlands
Recommendations

• Raise public awareness on equality and fundamental rights in society and address negative attitudes and cultural stereotyping towards older migrants and ethnic and religious minorities through awareness raising activities;
• Ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW);
• Take into account the specific problems of older migrants and minorities in the development of laws, policy and practice;
• Ensure that the principles of equal treatment and equal opportunities are applied effectively to all.

Social inclusion

As population ageing is expected to grow rapidly over the next 30 years\(^1\), the social and economic integration of older ethnic and religious minorities and older migrants into the society of their receiving countries is vital. However, the extent to which older migrants and minorities (as classified under the third category and described on page 1) are able to participate in the economic and social life is relatively small. According to several testimonies from members of these disadvantaged groups living in different Member States, there is a clear tendency for them to be more excluded from participation in civic, social and cultural life than older people of non-ethnic or from non-migrant backgrounds.

Ethnic minorities confronted more often with problems of poverty and social exclusion need to be empowered including through a more direct involvement in decision making at local level. For instance, a participatory decision-making approach can be used in urban development at local level in order to address the specific needs of ethnic minorities – by seeking to foster the active participation of people confronted with poverty and social exclusion, together with their representative organisations, and by allowing their direct contribution into decision-making.

The Danish Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration had intended to grant more than a million euros for projects helping isolated older people in Denmark. The main aim was to find ways to involve them in voluntary work and social activities to prevent loneliness and social isolation. However, none of the ethnic minority or migrant organisations could benefit from the project, since 90% of the resources were divided among the Danish NGOs working

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"I have volunteered in a local mosque teaching Urdu to young Pakistani children who were born in Denmark. Many older migrants and elderly from ethnic and religious minority backgrounds meet in mosques because there are no activity centres for them provided by the municipalities."

Male, 54, Denmark
with local people believed to have better connections with the authorities and skilled staff more successful in applying for project funding. EU Member States must pay attention to such practices and should not under-estimate but rather value the importance of ethnic minority and migrant organisations in their roles to reach out to specific disadvantaged groups.

Some migrants are in a disadvantageous situation due to a lack of knowledge about the society in which they live or national social security schemes and how they can use these to acquire eligible benefits. At the same time, some social administrations lack sufficient knowledge about older migrants and their specific needs, such as in relation to food, information on public assistance, including home care, pensions and supplementary help.

Voting rights are extremely limited for migrants in most Member States. Other forms of civic participation are usually restricted by factors such as language and education as studies show that educated migrants and minorities may have easier access to local politics, trade unions and NGOs than those with lower educational levels. Regardless of education and language ability, some still feel less welcome in organisations that are organised and run by people from non-ethnic backgrounds. While these groups may not be explicitly excluded from participating, they might experience insults and inappropriate remarks about their ethnic and religious background or migrant status, which may invoke reluctance to engage more in organisations or political parties.

The consequences of long-term unemployment and isolation can have a considerable impact on both young and older migrants and ethnic and religious minorities. Impacts of this on older migrants have in some cases led to their losing or forgetting the language of the receiving society in which they live, in particular as symptoms of Alzheimer’s or other degenerative diseases emerge as well as overall exclusion from societal participation.

On the other hand, volunteering is common among older ethnic and religious minorities and older migrants living in different EU countries. They especially get involved in voluntary work in their own communities, helping in education or social services. Volunteering enables them to keep busy and remain active and useful by contributing to society.
Different testimonies of older people from ethnic and religious minority backgrounds have shown that many, making up the third categories of older migrants and religious and ethnic minorities, see themselves as being relatively poor, living in marginalised areas, and frequent victims of racism and negative attitudes which has contributed to their social exclusion. For example, in the UK, the phenomenon of pensioner poverty results in the exclusion of older migrants and minorities as they are forced due to financial constraints to withdraw more from participating in societal activities that cost money. Nearly one out of two Bangladeshi and Pakistani pensioners live in poverty, as do one in four older black Caribbean people, compared to one in six white UK pensioners. Discrimination in youth thus continues to negatively affect the lifestyle of older migrants and minorities as their state pension incomes are often so meagre that they lack sufficient money to adequately heat their homes. Many older ethnic and religious minorities and migrants feel that the government is not compensating them satisfactorily for the economic contributions they made to the country by paying into the welfare system throughout their working lives.

Negative stereotypes fostered by the native population about older ethnic and religious minorities and migrants strongly contribute to their vulnerability. Moreover, this disadvantaged group often lacks information about possibilities and opportunities to deal with negative stereotypes affecting them as a result of discriminatory attitudes and practices among the wider society.

The EU officially recognises migrants and people from ethnic and religious minorities as being particularly vulnerable to the risks of social exclusion and deserving of special attention in the designing of social inclusion programmes. Equal participation in society for young and old, migrant and nationals, should be addressed for a more inclusive society. The immediate response to dealing with poor practices has to be protection from discrimination and social exclusion as well as the creation of more positive attitudes towards older ethnic

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and religious minorities and older migrants. Measures to tackle the problems of racism and xenophobia in society are clearly needed. The relevant authorities have to make all possible efforts to ensure that older ethnic and religious minorities and migrants are in a position to make a positive contribution to the society in which they live.

**Recommendations**

- Formulate policy guidelines at national level to assure that older migrants and ethnic and religious minorities can age with dignity;
- Support the development and expansion of national social inclusion projects and initiatives for older ethnic and religious minority and migrant organisations;
- Encourage initiatives involving volunteers to provide free language interpretation services, especially for very old persons, at primary care clinics, hospitals and social services in areas where a significant number of ethnic and religious minorities and migrants live;
- Mainstream the objectives of inclusion, non-discrimination and anti-racism in all relevant EU strategies and policies, including in health, housing, and education;
- Use the renewed social OMC to address the social integration and inclusion of older migrants who face difficulties in accessing employment and training or lifelong learning.

**Access to adequate income in old age**

Current social and demographic changes have forced the issue of social security in old age more acutely onto the EU social policy agenda, which has led to calls for the renegotiation of existing pension provisions in Member States. The issue of increasing migration has become a central concern for both the EU and individual Member States, in large part because it has raised fears in host countries about the costs of supporting significant populations of migrants as they enter old age. Furthermore, while there is a significant diversity in the national pension systems that provide for the wellbeing of older migrants, the effects of migratory movements on national social security systems and the level and range of provisions made available to individual older migrants are often in danger of being oversimplified.

Whilst much of the pension reform discourse is increasingly being constructed at the EU level, the principle of subsidiarity continues to restrict the

“Although I have not experienced very visible social barriers which could prevent me from participating in society, I have experienced a lot of humiliation and implicit racism both in my work and in the political party I was involved in. In the end it became intolerable and I had to take early retirement.”

*Male, 64, Denmark*
EU’s ability to intervene directly in the welfare system of Member States. The continued diversity of welfare states across Europe remains, therefore, of obvious importance to older migrants as the social security benefits available to senior citizens vary considerably depending upon the receiving state in which they reside. Despite an increased interest in the financial wellbeing of older people, many retired migrants who are legally resident in the EU face structural disadvantages. There appear to be four linked factors which are of particular importance in shaping the pension rights and levels of financial provision available to individual older migrants: migration history, socio-legal status, past employment history and location within a particular Member State.

Rights to social security are therefore highly variable and dependent on the label under which the older migrant initially entered the country and has since acquired over time. The social security rights of such migrants are further complicated by the fact that many rights to pensions and social assistance in old age are dependent upon a complex tier of entitlements linked to a migrant’s socio-legal status in EU law and employment history in the host country, as well as to bilateral agreements between the country of origin and the receiving country. This may be limited if the older migrant has arrived in the recent past, if qualifications were not recognised, if the individual was denied access to the labour market, struggled from discrimination, was underpaid or exploited.

Moreover, some transnational migrants did not take one simple migration path, but lived and worked in numerous different countries which further complicates the process for them to collect the entitlements paid into the different state systems. In addition to addressing these structural issues to simplify this process, it is likewise essential that programmes be implemented to address the low levels of saving and pensions among some older migrants and ethnic and religious minorities as well as other forms of financial exclusion that they face. For example, in the UK, the situation of retired ethnic and religious minorities and migrants in comparison to older natives is generally poor, i.e. pensioner poverty now stands at 18% and rises to 30% for older black Caribbean people and 49% for Bangladeshis/Pakistanis. This disparity is expected to grow significantly in the future.

Recommendations

• Combat the multiple disadvantages older migrants face by creating adequate old-age income - through equality measures in employment and the promotion and enhancement of rights to access individual pensions;
• Guarantee an adequate minimum pension to prevent poverty among the most vulnerable older people, including older minorities who for justified reasons are unable to contribute to social protection schemes. Social protection, provided by the state, should be a necessary safety net for all;

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• Implement programmes to address the low levels of saving and pensions among ethnic minorities and migrants and other forms of financial exclusion which they face;
• Provide adequate information about rights to pensions for older migrants and ethnic and religious minorities.

Employment

To ensure the dignity of older ethnic and religious minorities and migrants, their participation in paid employment must be facilitated since many from this particular target group face precarious working situations. Adjusting to life in a new country can be difficult for any newcomer, but older migrants experience additional difficulties. In the context of the ongoing economic crisis, they are more likely to be affected by unemployment or ineligible to receive a state pension.

Some older ethnic and religious minorities and older migrants encounter significant barriers to workforce incorporation due to a combination of ageism and discrimination based on race and/or ethnicity. The reasons for their high unemployment rates are diverse and include employers’ preferences to hire cheaper and younger workers and the preferential principle of hiring EU citizens first.

In the employment context, older ethnic and religious minorities and migrants continue to experience intense discrimination in different EU Member States. For example, in the UK, almost all workers from ethnic and religious minority backgrounds find that their experiences of discrimination intensify as they grow older. According to a survey conducted by the National Health Trust (NHS) in the UK, older, employed women are most likely to experience age discrimination which is usually bound up with gender, race and class discrimination. Indeed, it was apparent among respondents who had participated in telephone interviews that, once those with an immigrant background had said their names, their probability of getting the job offer was often reduced to zero.

“I worked in a bank for 30 years. After the changes in the management, employees above 40 were asked to sign a letter of resignation. This totally changed my social status: as a 47 years old Roma, I was absolutely not interesting for employers.”

Female, 56, Slovakia

“Soon after coming to Denmark I got a job in a bread factory but unfortunately I was laid off, together with other minority workers my age. I was replaced by Eastern European workers who were paid less, as well as by younger Danes, who were not known to demand an equal rate of pay.”

Male, 54, Denmark
Indeed, individuals with a foreign sounding name are more likely to experience obstacles in accessing the labour market. Likewise, they need to make a much greater effort to obtain paid work than non-ethnic groups. Even if candidates have more experience and better education, they are still not the first ones on the shortlist. Moreover, older ethnic and religious minorities and migrants usually experience the problem of non-recognition of the qualifications they obtained in their country of origin.

Harsh working conditions are a common setting faced by disadvantaged groups. They are often forced to work longer hours without any compensation, receive inappropriate remarks from their employers and are subject to jealousy and discrimination by their colleagues, which may sometimes lead them to go into early retirement. Moreover, several respondents noticed that constant discrimination in the workplace on the basis of their ethnicity or religion had a negative impact on their psychological health.

Age discrimination and ethnic and religious discrimination in the workplace are key problems and these combined pose enormous difficulties for older people from ethnic, religious or migrant backgrounds who need or wish to work. To the fullest extent possible, governments should make all possible efforts to enable older ethnic and religious minorities and migrants to participate in decently paid employment in safe, secure and healthy working conditions.

**Recommendations**

- Ensure that the Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC) is adequately implemented;
- Tackle the multiple discrimination faced by older ethnic and religious minority and migrants workers in employment by commissioning studies and encouraging awareness raising, training and education projects;
- Address the ethnic pay gap and problems linked to recognition of qualifications which eventually has negative consequences for older migrants.

**Decent housing**

In the EU older people from ethnic minority communities and older migrants are generally at a greater risk of being excluded from the housing market than older non-ethnic native
groups. They experience this exclusion in relation to discrimination in the allocation of housing, poor quality housing, and the high cost of housing relative to income. This situation poses challenges for their effective integration into their local communities and creates broader societal problems that are damaging to social cohesion.

This is because the relative poverty and weak labour market position of older people from ethnic and religious minority communities and older migrants restricts their choices in the housing market and constrains their ability to be residentially mobile in order to improve their housing situation. Legal status and ethnic origin are key factors affecting access to the housing market. For these groups, ethnic discrimination and harassment also play an important part in the disproportionate housing exclusion they experience. In particular, older migrants face additional difficulties due to lack of information on local housing systems and how to gain access to decent housing.

Poor and sometimes harsh housing conditions compound problems related to ageing for some older people in ethnic communities. A large majority of older people live in multigenerational households and have been doing so for many decades. In some cases, their houses are old and derelict with inadequate access to electricity, water supply or heating. Sometimes they cannot afford to pay for these basic utilities. In these cases, their situation exceeds simple poverty. Yet, some multigenerational houses are better established and better equipped to cover these basic amenities.

Beyond poverty, another challenge related to housing relates to the fact that long-term care facilities are not always adapted to the diverse cultural, religious or linguistic needs of older minorities and migrants, requiring that local assessment be carried out to determine how best to accommodate the needs of these older residents. Another concern relates to the safety of the neighbourhood in which older residents live.

It is evident that significant variations exist within and between different migrant and ethnic groups and that specific issues or problems can be discerned in both those countries with a long history of immigration and in countries with a more
recent experience of immigration, in particular the central European Member States.

**Recommendations**

- Housing societies should provide accommodation in attractive and safe areas and not send ethnic minorities to socially deprived areas;
- Carers and staff in long-term care facilities should be sensitised to develop intercultural competencies, mediation skills and knowledge of diversity and equality issues. Residential care homes and activity centres should enable separate sections for older ethnic minorities, if residents prefer this, but its staff should be composed of members from the ethnic and native populations;
- The 2008 proposal for the Horizontal Directive should be adopted to protect elderly and religious minorities and migrants from racism in the housing market.

**Health and long-term care**

The first generation of migrants arrived - or was asked to come - in the expectation that in the long run they would return to their country of origin. So there was no assumption on their arrival that they would wish or need to integrate. Now they find that their access to health services is limited mainly because of the lack of sufficient and targeted support in these services. Their lack of language skills, their reluctance to talk about certain symptoms (especially among older migrant women) and their lack of knowledge of the existing services can also represent challenges. Living in a separate community within the host country also increases their susceptibility to depression and social exclusion. Older migrants and older ethnic and religious minorities also tend to have a limited understanding of how to access health and long-term care systems. In this perspective, it is important to recall that their socio-economic status has a considerable impact on their state of health and that social exclusion increases the likelihood of them ageing in poor health. This means that the health care needs of older ethnic and religious minorities and older migrants can be particularly pronounced.

Both at EU and national levels, the main problem is a lack of data on the situation of the different groups of older migrants, regarding their number - both legal and illegal in each category - and subsequently their social security status and legal rights to health and social care. Access to healthcare for older migrants may be affected by numerous factors which Member States need to take into consideration. The challenge in terms of access to health and long-term care of older migrants in the EU will be to find an integrated approach where all residents’ rights and human rights need to be addressed so that health inequalities are reduced and a healthier ageing population in the EU is constructed.
Older migrants are in many cases disadvantaged in terms of accessing and making use of adequate health and social care services. In 2000, a working committee under the name of Charter for Culture-sensitive Care in Old Age was founded by social welfare organisations in Germany working with older people including migrants. In 2006, this working committee was transformed into a Forum for Culture-Sensitive Care in Old Age with the involvement of national government representatives, national and local welfare associations and migrant organisations in Germany. The committee developed a memorandum, a support manual with innovative approaches and practical tools for the implementation of culture-sensitive care for older people, training courses, as well as providing a focal point for networking, lobbying and public relations.

“It must be considered that older migrants can have specific problems in accessing and using health and care services. In particular, in many ways, older migrants and older people from ethnic minorities face institutionalised racism and a higher risk of elder abuse as they are often unaware of their rights or do not dare to report abuses due to their perceived vulnerability of their legal status and lack of trust in the institutions. They share the same difficulties that any ageing person may encounter, including problems arising from non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, arthritis, hypertension and Alzheimer’s disease, which bring additional problems that hinder their ability to access basic health and social services. Other challenges relate to cultural differences, hesitancy in reporting about intimate health issues with doctors, or misunderstandings resulting from this timidity. It is necessary to look for ways and means to better inform older migrants about these services. Little is also known about genetic based illnesses which many older migrants suffer from and AGE and ENAR recommend that research in this area be developed.

Because of a frequently chaotic life course, it may also be necessary to include psychological support and specific services and treatment to some older ethnic and religious minorities and migrant groups. Individuals from these groups should be included as advisors in the health centres of their locality to provide adequate support and to build up appropriate and targeted programmes.

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4 Forum For Culture-Sensitive Care In Old Age, http://interlinks.euro.centre.org/model/example/ForumForCultureSensitiveCareInOldAge
5 Forum für eine kultursensible Altenhilfe, www.kultursensible-altenhilfe.de
It is also important to develop a community-based approach that aims to cultivate partnerships with minority and ethnic communities and facilitate constructive interactions between patients, administrative staff and health care professionals.

“One’s family, with help from community services, looks after older migrants. If not, the community must help them to survive. There is no discrimination in this field; the local people suffer as much as the migrants. Many are waiting for a place in a long-term care home. With some help, they will be offered a stay of about 3 weeks in a long-term care home twice a year so their carers can have a break.”

Female, aged 65, Iceland

Regular involvement of both ethnic minorities’ and older people’s NGOs as informers and mediators, as well as support givers in case of difficulties, is essential to ensure adequate access of older migrants and minorities to healthcare and social services. The involvement of their representatives in decisions around their healthcare is also an important means to tackle the persisting healthcare inequalities between different ethnic groups including through cultural sensitisation of health workers and the development of a clear policy framework for service development for older migrant and ethnic and religious minority people.

A solution to the problem of social and healthcare services’ provision for older migrants and ethnic minorities, who have not paid contributions to their host country social security system, is urgently needed. Good practice examples can be found in the European Charter of rights and responsibilities of people in need of long-term care and assistance.

Recommendations

• Tackle the persistent health inequalities between different ethnic groups including through cultural sensitisation of health workers;
• Develop a clear policy framework for health services equally accessible for ethnic and religious minorities and migrant older people;
• Use the renewed social OMC to compare practices at Member State level to better address the social integration, inclusion and health care needs of older migrants and older people from ethnic and religious minorities;
• Use the renewed social OMC to address the social integration, inclusion and health care needs of older migrants and older people from ethnic and religious minorities who face additional difficulties in accessing affordable health care services and eligibility to social protection systems;

• Carry out research at EU and Member State levels to investigate the numbers and situation of migrants in the older age groups to better understand the many challenges older ethnic and religious minorities and migrants face;
• Develop and apply appropriate policies and strategies for dealing with the specific health and healthcare problems, which confront older ethnic minorities and older migrants including in the context of long-term care.

**Solidarity between Generations**

Solidarity ties existing within the community may be a source of support reducing vulnerability, breaking down harmful stereotypes by bringing everybody together and creating a framework for dialogue.

It has been a tradition in many countries for older migrants and ethnic and religious minorities to live with their children and grandchildren so that their care can be provided directly by their adult children and surrounding family members. However, these trends are likely to change as adult children now usually live independently from their aged parents and do not often have the living space to accommodate them. Families are also more spread out geographically which means that it is not always possible to provide care for sick elderly family members. To solve the problem, Denmark has experimented by establishing “common living areas”, for elderly Danes. However, it is believed that probably only a small number of older migrants will use these as they will prefer to live among people of the same nationality and where there are staff who speak their language and understand their cultural and religious needs.

"The question of respect for the elderly is very important in our culture and we try to pass it on to our younger generations."

**Male, 54, Denmark**

Interviews carried out among ENAR and AGE members show that there is extensive and frequent family contact between aged parents from ethnic and religious minority backgrounds or migrants and their adult children. For example, respondents from Pakistan and Morocco living in Denmark said that they maintain good relationships with the younger generation because respectful behaviour is deeply enrooted in their culture. However, there appear to be few opportunities for old and young people to meet and exchange ideas in contemporary societies, as many of the respondents expressed their concern about the lack of specific programmes or events that bring them to meet and work together in local community
initiatives. It is evident that mosques play an important role among Muslim communities, as do some other religious institutions such as synagogues, churches, temples, etc. for diasporic and minority communities. But beyond the spiritual institutional and ethnic-based community support, there are not many existing structures or programmes for other religious, ethnic or migrant communities.

Roma respondents living in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia reported that solidarity ties between generations are weak and that only those who are in a better economic and social situation are trying to help each other. The community experiences this phenomenon and the loss of family celebrations and festivities accentuate this.

It is essential that local authorities support the initiatives between older generations of ethnic and religious minorities and migrants and younger generations. The contact and interaction between them would lessen intergenerational misunderstanding and help combat marginalisation and vulnerability among older age groups. Moreover, it would be highly recommendable if mainstream society actors would also engage in these intergenerational activities as well.

**Recommendations**

- Build on the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations to raise awareness and improve the situation of older migrants and ethnic and religious minorities;
- Acknowledge the contribution of older migrants and minority communities at the social, cultural and economic level through educational programmes, cultural events and intergenerational solidarity initiatives;
- Facilitate and support migrant and ethnic and religious minority communities to develop and expand intergenerational projects and initiatives;
- Involve older migrants and ethnic and religious minorities in the design and implementation of initiatives to promote active ageing and intergenerational solidarity among migrant and ethnic communities.

“I think the younger generation has a bad routine, they are unemployed and socially excluded,”

Male, 70, Czech Republic
Conclusion

Given the inexorable momentum of contemporary social, economic and political changes, most particularly population ageing and increasing migration, it is inevitable that these issues concerning older ethnic and religious minorities and migrants will assume a growing importance for social policies. Unfortunately this is not a high priority on the policy agendas of either the EU or of many Member States. Furthermore, the popular press across Europe increasingly portrays non EU migrants as a potential threat to national security and as a potential drain on finite welfare resources.

AGE and ENAR are particularly concerned that in today’s world where Member States are looking to do less for their own citizens, they will choose to downplay or ignore the needs of those who are among the most vulnerable in society, some of whom include older migrants and older ethnic and religious minorities. We stress the need for more to be done to develop policies and implement measures, which will improve the lives of the increasing number of ageing migrants and ethnic and religious minorities in our societies, to meet their specific needs and to address the multiple discrimination they face.

ENAR and AGE strongly believe that a new social vision of how to best advance the well-being of all generations in our diverse societies must take into account the needs and experiences of all older people in the ethnic, religious and migrant communities across the EU who are vulnerable to racism, xenophobia and age discrimination. We call for more social cohesion and seek to promote the benefits of an age-friendly and racism-free EU, which we believe is critical for realising a more socially cohesive society and for tackling the demographic and economic challenges that we face today and will continue to face in the coming years.

ENAR is a network of some 700 NGOs working to combat racism in all EU member states. ENAR is determined to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, to promote equality of treatment between EU citizens and third country nationals, and to link local/regional/national and European initiatives. www.enar-eu.org

AGE Platform Europe is a European network of organisations of people aged 50+ and represents over 25 million older people in Europe. AGE aims to voice and promote the interests of the 150 million inhabitants aged 50+ in the European Union and to raise awareness of the issues that concern them most. www.age-platform.eu