

## A Society for all Generations

### Ways to avoid the Social Exclusion of Older People

#### THE ATHENS DECLARATION

October 1<sup>st</sup> 2006

The great changes in modern society – demographic, family, social and economic – have created a society which has proved itself incapable of ensuring that all generations enjoy equal rights and respect. The most vulnerable generation is that of older people or “Seniors”, who are driven more and more into loneliness, isolation and social exclusion. This situation demands that society research and implement all possible ways of avoiding this.

**New political strategies** are clearly needed so that all generations in our society can live together in justice, solidarity and respect for one another and avoid the discrimination which above all affects older people and can condemn them to loneliness, isolation and social exclusion.

These strategies should be concentrated on the following points:

- ❑ **Strategies to strengthen inter-generational co-operation** by emphasising to families the importance of the role of grandparents in the psychosomatic development of the children even when the generations no longer live under the same roof; to promote further co-operation between families and schools in terms of inter-generational school-based and out-of-school activities; and the development of appropriate teaching and learning materials and the provision of continuing education programmes for both parents and teachers.

- ❑ **Strategies to help Seniors avoid social exclusion** including increasing the provision of Day Centres for Seniors, providing more opportunities for leisure and social activities, visits and tourism, including easily accessible parks and open spaces, increasing the availability and accessibility of public transport, improving street lighting and increasing the number of pedestrian crossings with traffic lights, and better measures to prevent and combat crime and violence against Seniors.
- ❑ **Strategies to help Seniors to preserve their autonomy** including promoting and developing state-funded sheltered accommodation and appropriate care for Seniors wishing to remain in their own homes, the encouragement and support of voluntary organisations who can provide Seniors with information about local activities and services available and assist with access to them.
- ❑ **Strategies to help Seniors lead an active life as long as possible** by ensuring their participation in all decision-making forums dealing with matters that concern and affect them, encouraging and supporting voluntary organisations to protect their rights, promoting inter-generational co-operation and activities, introducing new working structures that will allow the merging of pensions and salaries so that “younger” Seniors can continue to participate in the economic life of the country by making the knowledge and experience that they have acquired throughout their lives available to society.
- ❑ **Strategies to provide Seniors with opportunities for Lifelong Learning** especially courses in new technologies and Universities of the Third Age etc.
- ❑ **Strategies to protect Seniors from Social Exclusion** including improved pensions, better care services especially for Seniors living in their own homes and not only financial support for families who care for dependent Seniors at home.
- ❑ **Strategies to enable Seniors to lead full and active lives after retiring.**

Taking all this into consideration:

We, the members of the European Senior Citizens Union meeting today, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006 in Athens, the cradle of democracy, declare that:

- ❑ **We emphasise our solidarity with all generations in our society.**
- ❑ **We offer the younger generations the knowledge, experience and wisdom that we have acquired throughout our lives.**
- ❑ **We extend our hands and hearts to the younger generations** as fathers, mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers.
- ❑ **We ask only for recognition, respect and equal rights as active members of society.**
- ❑ **We reject loneliness, isolation and social exclusion** and call upon all other generations to work with us in finding ways of preventing this and, as the great Greek poet K Kavafis sought to do in his poetry, namely to “Open the windows so that the sun and light of a society in which all generations are united may penetrate into the depths of all our hearts.”



**EUROPEAN SENIORS CITIZENS' UNION**

**ATHENS REGIONAL CONFERENCE**

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