



## Press release

7 December 2015

# Towards an Age-Friendly Europe: Launch of the EU Covenant on Demographic Change

**Today, the AFE-INNOVNET Thematic Network on innovation for age-friendly environments is very pleased to launch the Covenant on Demographic Change. The Covenant is set to become the new EU-wide association gathering local, regional and national authorities, civil society organisations, universities, and businesses that commit to cooperate and implement evidence-based solutions to support active and healthy ageing as a comprehensive answer to Europe's demographic challenge. 77 organisations have already confirmed their willingness to join the Covenant, including 46 local and regional authorities.**

Europe is rapidly ageing. People aged 65+ represented 17.4% of the population in 2010 and this is set to reach 30% in 2060. Therefore, today's urgency is to find sustainable solutions to empower people to live healthily, actively and independently for longer, in order to lower the pressure put on family carers and on public health and long-term care budgets, as well as to enhance quality of life and well-being in later age.

*"We think that the best approach to ageing is the promotion of age-friendly communities where public space, transport, housing and local services are conceived with the needs of all generations in mind, fostering also solidarity and cooperation between generations",* underlined **Markku Markkula, President of the Committee of the Regions.**

Public authorities, as main providers of services and responsible for territorial planning, are playing a key role here. This is why, with the support of the Committee of the Regions, the European Commission and in close cooperation with the World Health Organisation, more than 150 subnational authorities, research centres and civil society organisations have gathered today to launch the Covenant on Demographic Change.

The Covenant on Demographic Change, legally established as an international non-profit association under the Belgian law, is open to all interested parties (i.e. local, regional and national authorities, as well as civil society organisations, industries, research centres and universities) that voluntarily commit to making age-friendly environments a reality in their communities and to share their experience with other Covenant members.

The Covenant *"harnesses the expertise and experience of stakeholders at local, regional and national levels, along with that of European policymakers. This collective knowledge will help tackle the challenges of an ageing society"*, commented **Commissioner Marianne Thyssen** in her introductory speech. *"By formalising and structuring discussions with local and regional actors, it will give both the technical framework and the political impetus to create age-friendly environments"*, she continued.

By joining the Covenant, European local and regional authorities will position themselves at the forefront in addressing population ageing. They will benefit from a wide range of opportunities for mutual learning and partnership, various tools to implement and assess the impact of their age-friendly initiatives, and will lead the way to help Europe become age-friendly.

*"The idea of such a Covenant was born during the European Year 2012 on Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. After several years of hard work, we are very happy to launch it today at the Committee of the Regions", said **Anne-Sophie Parent, Secretary General of AGE Platform European and AFE-INNOVNET Coordinator.** "We are even more pleased to see that already 77 organisations, including 46 cities and regions, have already decided to join. This is a great step to make population ageing an opportunity for Europe and finally recognise seniors as an asset and not as a burden", she added.*

*"After two years of hard work within the AFE-INNOVNET Thematic Network, we want to maintain and expand our position on rehabilitation of our elder citizens, to keep physically active and self-reliant – enabling to "Life Long Living", said **Mayor Jacob Bjerregaard, from the Fredericia Municipality in Denmark.** "By joining the Covenant, Fredericia gets a unique opportunity to stay ahead of the challenges and opportunities linked to demographic change", he concluded.*

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## HOW TO JOIN THE COVENANT?

-  Visit [www.agefriendlyeurope.org](http://www.agefriendlyeurope.org)
-  Follow us on Twitter (@AgeFriendlyEU)
-  Join our LinkedIn group (Covenant on Demographic Change)
-  Or contact us directly at [contact@agefriendlyeurope.org](mailto:contact@agefriendlyeurope.org)

## Annex

# Public authorities and organisations having expressed their willingness to join the Covenant on Demographic Change

### 46 Local and regional authorities

Agia Varvara municipality (Greece), CCAS de la Ville de Marseille (France), Fredericia municipality (Denmark), 25 Irish Age-Friendly Cities and Counties (Ireland), City of Leuven (Belgium), Local Association of Attica Municipalities (Greece), City of Manchester (UK), City of Stockholm (Sweden), City of Tampere (Finland), Nacka municipality (Sweden), City of Ljubljana (Slovenia), Réseau Francophone des Villes Amies des Aînés, City of Arnsberg (Germany), City of Naples – Campania Reference Site (Italy), DCRN (EU), ELISAN network (EU), ENSA network (EU), City of Udine (Italy), Celje municipality (Slovenia), Veneto Region (Italy), Government of Biscay (Spain), City of Salerno (Italy), City of Brussels (Belgium), Aartselaar municipality (Belgium), City of Krakow (Poland)

### 15 Civil society organisations and foundations

AGE Platform Europe (EU), Age Cymru (UK), Caritas Coimbra (Portugal), SIVI cluster (Spain), Solimai Soc.Coop.ar.l. (Italy), From Generation to Generation (UK), Polish Institute of Silver Economy (Poland), RBS Center fir Altersfroen (Luxembourg), International Council on Social Welfare (EU), Agentschap Toegankelijk Vlaanderen (Belgium), Association HIPOKAMP (Poland), EuroHealthNet (EU), European Union Geriatric Medicine Society (EU), The Intercivil Society (UK), Anouk Foundation (Switzerland)

### 10 Universities and research centres

Polibienestar Research Institute – University of Valencia (Spain), University of Edinburgh (UK), Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (Spain), INRCA (Italy), Dublin City University (Ireland), LifeTechValley, boosting healthy aging (Belgium), Tallinn University of Technology (Estonia), IRS – Istituto Ricerca Sociale (Italy), FORTH – Foundation for Research and Technology Hellas (Greece), University of Deusto (Spain), Matia Institute (Spain)

### 6 Businesses

Norske Helsehus AS (Norway), ESCOOL (Spain), Acvfit (France), ENGIE Belgium (Belgium), 40+Lab (Portugal)

Join the Covenant here: [agefriendlyeurope.org/covenant](http://agefriendlyeurope.org/covenant)