

### **Charter to test the elderly policy in Europe**

1. For social security and protection of older persons, it is necessary to have a declaration of the rights, but also the responsibilities, of older persons. Reason for EURAG (European federation of older persons) to make a charter for the elderly.
2. All elderly people in Europe, regardless of sex, race, religion, life conviction, income, disability or sexual preference, have the right to lead valued and independent lives and to participate in social and cultural life.

The rights of older persons also emphasise their responsibility to fellow human beings as well as to the community and future generations.

Including protection where it is necessary and contribution to the society, if possible.

3. You can say it in general: How lower the dependency, how higher the responsibility to contribute and ..... how bigger the dependency, how lower the responsibility to contribute and how bigger the appeal to the rights.
4. On the Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Léon, November 2007, was the conclusion that for a society for all ages, we need:  
Active citizenship and participation  
A dynamic civil society  
Interaction between government and citizens  
Social cohesion  
No discrimination  
The empowerment of older and younger people and the promotion of their full participation  
Working together. Younger and older people.

And in the charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 2000 we can read: The Union recognises and respects the rights of elderly to lead a life of dignity and independence and to participate in social and cultural life.

It's all necessary for social protection.

5. Older persons have the right to autonomy and control over their own lives, also in difficult situations and in the case of difficult decisions. If they need care and cure, we have to take the person as starting point. Within the limits by law, the elderly have the right to make their own decisions about starting, continuing or terminating medical treatment. Even when living in dependent circumstances, older persons have rights and responsibilities, including the right to decide about their own quality of life. Quality of life has priority.

Older people are a part of the community and have the right to be treated as such. With respect and allowing their value. But the elderly have the responsibility to fulfil their social roles in accordance with their abilities. In this way, they can provide an effective contribution to a positive image of older people. And ... that's necessary in this time!

Age discrimination is prohibited. Age limits do not provide the basis for any judgement concerning the opportunities of individuals, also older persons. They have the right to equal treatment, for example insofar as the sharing of living space is concerned. Elderly have the right and the responsibility to perform (volunteer) work in accordance with their capacities.

Older persons have the right, I said it before, but also the responsibility to participate in the society. They have the right, but also the responsibility to share values, standards, knowledge, life-experience and skills with younger generations. They also have the right to participate in training programs and so on, in order to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. In this days, in which older persons have to work longer before going in pension, companies have to give some consideration to ageing employees and create flexible working conditions, knowing that older people are valuable through their experience and wisdom. Important is, that older people use their experience and wisdom in a modest manner.

In the society, older people, must be able to exercise their democratic rights at all levels and are responsible for making their voices heard. If possible, they have to make themselves available for political and social functions, but also they have the right to defend their material and immaterial interests. If possible in own organisations.

Elderly have the responsibility of contributing, in accordance with their capacities, to the financing of the social security system and community services. They need financial security and an income that is related to salary developments. This also applies to single women and older migrants. Economical independence is important. Also important for social relations.

6. Elderly have the right to personal development, social contact and meaningful lives. Including access to educational programs, I said before. They have the right to spiritual care and must be able to attend church services and religious assemblies. They need own social networks.

Older persons have the right to the information enabling them to make decisions for themselves and maintain control over their lives. They also have the right to information about health, care and cure, but are themselves also responsible for a healthy and active manner of living. If possible. It is important other people use instruments/technology accessible for older persons.

The elderly are themselves responsible for securing a suitable housing situation and have the right to a physical and social infrastructure that makes it possible to continue living in a self-supporting manner for as long as possible. If necessary they need support and have the right to live in a protected residential environment in which a decent level of care is guaranteed.

Elderly have the right to care and cure, that contributes to a good quality of life. Partners, family-members and other volunteer aids, that take care of vulnerable older people, have a right to support. In the last phase of their lives, the elderly have the right to palliative care and to recognition of any wish to die in a dignified manner, as long as it complies with existing laws.

7. Ladies and gentlemen, The summary of my contribution is that communal life involves living with each other in a caring and respectful manner. This requires solidarity between young and old, rich and poor, sick and healthy, dependent and independent.

It has to be an investment of everybody.

Jaap van der Spek

