

Press release

29 January 2016

Moving from the AFE-INNOVNET Thematic Network to the EU Covenant on Demographic Change

After two years of hard work, the EU-funded AFE-INNOVNET Thematic Network is very happy to pass on the torch to the European Covenant on Demographic Change.

In such short time, AFE-INNOVNET managed to mobilise more than 350 public authorities, civil society organisations and businesses throughout Europe, and to develop several tools for older citizens' involvement and impact assessment of age-friendly initiatives.

As for the Covenant, it already gathers 112 organisations, including 44 local and regional authorities. 68 of them were present or represented today at the notary office in Brussels and signed Covenant Statutes as founding members; The Covenant will become an international non-for-profit organisation established under the Belgian law and will work in close cooperation with the World Health Organisation Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), physical and social environments are key determinants of whether people can remain healthy, independent and autonomous long into their old age. Creating age-friendly environments is therefore one of the most effective approaches to respond to demographic change.

The AFE-INNOVNET Thematic Network

With the support of the European CIP ICT PSP Programme and the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing, the AFE-INNOVNET Thematic Network mobilised 351 public authorities, civil society organisations, universities, research centres and businesses throughout Europe.

It developed a number of tools aimed at helping public authorities adapt their physical and social environments to population ageing, including a guide on how to involve older persons in the design and monitoring of their age-friendly initiatives, as well as an evaluation and impact assessment framework for such initiatives.

Most importantly, AFE-INNOVNET's overarching goal was to launch the Covenant on Demographic Change, i.e. a sustainable political and technical platform which will now gather national, regional and local public authorities, as well as other stakeholders, interested in promoting age-friendly environments as a response to Europe's demographic change.

The Covenant on Demographic Change

The Covenant was successfully launched on 7 December 2015 at the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in Brussels in presence of Markku Markkula, President of the CoR. Since then, 112 public authorities, civil society organisations and businesses, coming from 23 countries, have already joined it. Among them, we can count 44 national, regional or local public authorities.

Today, 68 founding members signed the Covenant's legal statutes at a notary office in Brussels. As founding members they also elected the following persons to compose the first Board of Directors:

President: Mr **Furio Honsell**, Mayor of the City of Udine, Italy

First Vice-President: Mrs **Joan Martin**, Chief Executive, Louth County Council, Ireland

Second Vice-President Mrs **Carina Dantas**, Innovation Director, Caritas Coimbra, Portugal

Secretary General: Mrs **Anne-Sophie Parent**, Secretary General of AGE Platform Europe, Belgium

Directors:

- Mr **Mikko Aaltonen**, Deputy Mayor of the City of Tampere, Finland
- Mr **Rodd Bond**, Member of the Age Friendly Ireland Executive Committee, Ireland
- Mrs **Antonia Caro-Gonzalez**, Head of International Research Project Office, University of Deusto, Spain
- Mrs **Elena Curtopassi**, representative of ENSA Network and Veneto Region, Italy
- Mrs **Mireia Ferri**, Researcher at Polibienestar, Spain
- Mrs **Chiara Giovannini**, Senior Manager, ANEC, Belgium
- Mrs **Dianne Gove**, Director for Projects, Alzheimer Europe, Luxembourg
- Mr **Brendan John Kenny**, Deputy Chief Executive of Dublin City Council, Director and Chair of Age Friendly Ireland, Ireland
- Mr **Martin Polenz**, Leader Staff Unit "Zukunft Alter" (Future of Ageing), City of Arnsberg, Germany
- Mrs **Chariklia Tziraki**, Member of Governing Board of Alzheimer Heraklion, Greece

On this occasion, Furio Honsell, newly-elected President of the Covenant, stated: *"It is a privilege to have been elected President of the Covenant on Demographic Change. I think the official signature of the Covenant's Statutes today by a large group of public authorities, civil society organisations, research centres and industries shows a large interest across the EU for working together to promote active and healthy ageing, enhance well-being and health and fight isolation, including for those who suffer from cognitive decline and their carers. Addressing the issue of demographic change is one of the greatest and most important challenges for European public authorities, citizens and economical actors, and for this reason I consider this to be a great honour but*





also a task of enormous importance and impact and a real contribution that Europe can make to the well-being of the entire world.”

By joining the Covenant, interested stakeholders 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 more age-friendly.

The Covenant is open to all public authorities and legally established organisations based in the EU and associate countries active in the field of age-friendly environments. Read more on the Covenant [here](#).

For more information, please visit www.agefriendlyeurope.org, follow on Twitter @AgeFriendlyEU and on LinkedIn “EU Covenant on Demographic Change”, or contact Julia Wadoux, AFE-INNOVNET Coordinator, at julia.wadoux@age-platform.eu or Tel.: +32.2.280.14.70.

HOW TO JOIN THE COVENANT?

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