



# **Mannheim Declaration**

## **What matters**

Declaration by BAGSO  
and its member organisations on the  
14th German Senior Citizens' Day 2025

*To mark the 14th German Senior Citizens' Day, BAGSO is publishing the following Mannheim Declaration, a manifesto of older people. In the temporal context of the event, it addresses the topics that are important today, from the perspective of older people who are involved in the various BAGSO member organisations.*

*Based on the self-image of BAGSO's member organisations as an important part of civil society, the Mannheim Declaration emphasises the role, claim and responsibility of older people with regard to shaping society's future tasks. The Mannheim Declaration aims to encourage all older people to take responsibility for tackling the challenges ahead and to work towards a good life in old age, enriching coexistence, the preservation of natural resources and a vibrant democracy.*

## The value of ageing



We live in challenging, contradictory times. Much of what used to seem certain or even expectable has now become uncertain. The war in Europe is making us realise our vulnerability and it will drastically change people's lives in Germany too. Belief in growth and progress is dwindling and many fear a loss of prosperity. At the same time, there is an urgent need to find answers to the major ecological crises. The long-held expectation that future generations will be better off than the present ones is hardly shared today. At a time of profound change and the associated uncertainties, we older people are contributing important resources to help shape a future worth living for all generations.

Quite a few of us older people have lived through times marked by war-related hardship and deprivation, suffered from being forced to flee and be displaced, or were victims of state persecution by the GDR\* regime. The migrants among us older people often lived and worked under difficult conditions as "guest workers" in West Germany or as "contract labourers" in the GDR. In East Germany, many of us older people have experienced huge breaks in our biographies as a result of the unification process, which quite a few have experienced as a devaluation of their life's achievements.

We older people have learnt to deal with these and similar stresses, to endure uncertainties and overcome resistance. With the resilience we have gained from this, we can encourage younger people to deal with changes, restrictions and losses.

---

\* The German Democratic Republic

We can convey to them that it is worth approaching tasks with confidence and for which there are no approved solutions. We have learnt that it pays off to make an effort and not to give up even in the face of setbacks and failure, but to fight for improvements. We know how important it is to fill life with meaning even under difficult conditions. We have experienced what it means to live in peace, freedom, prosperity and in a constitutional state. Many of us have been able to improve our lives through education.

Through our experiences, we older people have acquired skills that our society needs more urgently than ever today: our experience in dealing with crises and our will to value and preserve proven achievements. Above all, these achievements include a liberal democracy that guarantees all people in this country the rule of law, equal rights and the right to a dignity that is unconditional. Some of us have put ourselves at the service of our country's defence and security.

## Living responsibly



We older people are ready to embrace new ideas and benefit from the opportunities they bring. We want to face the challenges and questions of the future:

How can democracy be strengthened, diversity preserved, xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism overcome, and cohesion and solidarity grow among the population? How can we preserve the earth as a living space for future generations? How can we ensure that technical and digital developments continue to enable people to work and prosper in the future? How can we limit the manipulative effects of social media and effectively contain the risks of artificial intelligence?

We older generations are just as concerned with these and similar questions about the future as younger generations. Even if most of us consider our personal situation to be largely satisfactory, and even if we will probably no longer experience some of the upheavals and associated challenges due to our age, we are also burdened by concerns about the future.

We feel jointly responsible for ensuring that future generations will find a world with good living conditions and that our prosperity no longer comes at the expense of the global South. We see a respectful and socially responsible coexistence between the generations as essential for the cohesion of our society and seek to meet, share and learn with and from each other.

We believe in tolerance and respect for other opinions and ways of life and respect cultural, religious and sexual diversity. We recognise the value of approaching one another, of togetherness and mutual understanding.

### Being respected



Our society is dominated by the ideal of the productive, fit, flexible and always available human being. This puts us older people under pressure: old age is predominantly associated with negative perceptions and deficits and is discriminated against. As result, older persons are perceived as a burden and are prevented from participating in society.

However, old age is at least as diverse as other phases of life. Many of us want to and can still contribute our skills and abilities in old age. This is why age limits for certain jobs or the denial of the access to services should be scrutinised. We have a right to equal opportunities and respectful treatment in all areas of life: at work, in the healthcare system and in the public sphere. We stand up for our rights to be recognised and protected. To prevent exclusion and discrimination in old age, it is urgently necessary that the word 'age' be included in Article 3 of the Basic Law<sup>2</sup> for the Federal Republic of Germany.

Negative images of old age lead to a situation in which the contribution that we older people have made and continue to make to society is not recognised or is underestimated. We are firmly opposed to this. We older people want to be included on an equal footing, play a meaningful role in shaping public life and contribute our experience to a society for all ages. We are indispensable contributors to the future of our community – especially when times are difficult.

The appreciation of active ageing must not lead to a devaluation of frail (vulnerable) age, because the value of life is independent of a person's ability to perform. This unconditional appreciation of life is guaranteed in Article 1 of the Basic Law: "Human dignity shall be inviolable."

### What matters today



#### Being integrated

We older people are also dependent on human encounters and being part of a community – not least when relatives and friends do not live nearby or have already passed away. That's why we maintain our networks, seek contact with others and make time for conversations in our neighbourhood.

---

<sup>2</sup> The Basic Law is the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Municipalities should meet the need for social interaction by providing places where people can meet, supporting cultural and educational programmes, setting up contact points for older people or offering (outreach) counselling. They can thus make a valuable contribution to good ageing and count on us older people to participate in shaping our community. Shared housing projects also help to strengthen community life in the neighbourhood.

Poverty in old age prevents social participation and often leads to isolation and loneliness. People in material need rarely feel involved and responsible. In addition to material help, adequate social services are therefore necessary to enable people to live in dignity.

We older people want to live independently and autonomously for as long as possible. To ensure that this is also possible for people with health restrictions and disabilities, barriers and dangers must be removed: in our own home, on pavements and roads, in local public transport, with healthcare services, digital devices, household appliances and in many other areas of life.

### **Getting involved in society**

Many of us older people volunteer in various areas locally, in clubs and organisations. We contribute our time and skills to neighbourhoods, look after family and friends, take on responsibility and actively help shape social life in the community.

Many of us are active in the visiting service of church communities, maintain regular contact with people in care facilities and relieve the burden on family carers. We older people want to help shape new ways of caring for one another in our neighbourhoods and communities. Therein

our life experience and knowledge are valuable resources.

Those who get involved are not just doing something for others. Getting involved enriches your own life, is meaningful, promotes satisfaction, creates contacts and prevents loneliness. We can give something back to society and experience self-efficacy well into our old age. Last but not least, our commitment is an important contribution to a living democracy.

We would like our commitment to be recognised and appreciated for its quality and to have qualified contact persons in both urban and rural areas who can advise and support us if necessary.

### **Utilise educational opportunities and stay active**

An active life and personal development do not end when you retire. Growing old as healthily as possible involves not only sport and exercise, but also the willingness to continue learning throughout life. After all, learning is key to participation, self-determination and personal fulfilment, even in old age.

We strive to discover new things, deepen familiar ones, actively tackle age-related changes or deal with them constructively. Our aim is to use technical progress and digitalisation competently, to cultivate cultural interests and sporting activities and to be able to classify political developments. We want to move with the times and help shape changes in society, culture, politics and science.

We want customised educational formats and topics that are geared towards the needs, preferences and skills of us older persons. We expect educational

programmes to take place where we live: in our towns and villages. Education is important to us: as a place of active exchange and learning with and from each other – including between young and older people. Education is an effective way to combat loneliness and promote a good and healthy life, even in old age.

### Digital and analogue participation

Digitalisation has now taken hold in all areas of life. We cannot and do not want to ignore this, because we also benefit from it as older people: Virtual meetings and the use of social media promote contact with family and friends, messages can be exchanged quickly by digital means, digital documents can be enlarged easily, and information is quickly accessible. AI developments such as autonomous mobility services are also expected to make many aspects of everyday life much easier.

Digitalisation can contribute to a self-determined and independent life in old age if designed to be user-friendly and accessible. It is important that digital technologies are barrier-free, secure, available and affordable for everyone and that those of us who feel unsure about using new technologies are supported.

Many of us older persons already use digital technologies and pass on their knowledge to others in learning and experience centres such as senior citizens' offices or multi-generational houses. However, we must not forget those who do not have or do not want to have access to digital technology and the internet due to their income, lack of opportunities or for other reasons. Despite all the joy and enthusiasm about the new possibilities of digitalisation: A right to an offline life must continue to exist, and it must be ensured that people who need analogue

access to information and services also receive them.

### Helping and being helped

Helping and accepting help – this is a central principle of human interaction. Many of us older people find it easy to help others. However, accepting help is more difficult for some of us. The desire for an independent lifestyle and concerns about losing autonomy can be reasons for this. It is important not to see help as dependency, but as support in the endeavour to maintain self-determination and independence. Learning this and accepting your own vulnerability is an important prerequisite for a good life in old age.

First and foremost, the welfare state is responsible for ensuring that needs-based prevention and rehabilitation services as well as affordable professional care are provided, and all people who are dependent on help can live in dignity. This includes sufficient capacity in outpatient services and (partial) inpatient care services, financial security for carers, better reconciliation of care and work as well as further training opportunities.

At the same time, care is a task that affects us all. This is where it becomes particularly clear that we are dependent on each other: both as those in need of care and as carers. Many of us older people care for relatives or friends, contribute their knowledge, experience and time and thus relieve the burden on the help and care system. By caring for relatives and volunteering, we help shape solutions for the benefit of individuals, families and the community. For this, we need professional support and relief.

Growing older also means dealing openly with the end of life and the topics of dying, death and mourning, as well as providing

information and exchanging ideas on how to organise the end of life with dignity. To achieve this, we need modern hospice and palliative care that is tailored to needs and requirements.

### Actively standing up for democracy

Democracy is the basis for a good life in all phases of life. In a global comparison, it is a privilege to live in a democratic state. We should always be aware of this. We are currently experiencing how urgently we need to actively protect this framework for freedom, equality, social participation and justice. Everyone can contribute to this – in small and large ways.

Many of us older persons have been shaped by our personal experience of Nazi regime or the direct consequences of the Second World War. But we are also contemporary witnesses to the fact that enmity was overcome and a viable idea of living together in Europe in peace and freedom was developed.

We therefore see it as our task to stand up together with future generations when our democracy is in danger and marginalisation, hatred and violence are increasing at an alarming rate. Together, we want to help ensure that our everyday interactions are characterised by mutual respect, solidarity and tolerance and that we respectfully argue about common goals and the ways to achieve them. Where generally applicable regulations are required, compromises must be sought and found in a fair social negotiation process and if possible, everyone must be included.

We believe it is urgently necessary to strengthen political education and media literacy to enable people to critically scrutinise social and political developments and make informed decisions. This is essential to counteract manipulation, misinformation

and populism and to promote active, responsible participation in democratic discourse. We are involved in organising participation processes at as many levels and in as many ways as possible in which people experience self-efficacy by actively shaping their living environment.

Thanks to our diverse lives, we older people have the expertise, experience and will to contribute to a future worth living together. It is therefore more important than ever that we can participate in social life, that we are visible in the public sphere and that our voices are heard.

### It depends on all of us!



In times of uncertainty caused by multiple crises and far-reaching social and political changes, it is important to focus on the essential together.

It matters to draw strength, strengthen each other and take the next steps full of energy. This applies in our own lives as well as in politics and society. We can see what we have already achieved and what still needs to be done.

First and foremost, it is up to politicians to create a favourable framework: We older people expect the political decision-makers at federal, state and local level to advocate for a self-determined, jointly responsible and healthy ageing with social security. We expect that they promote a differentiated, contemporary image of ageing and perceive old age as a phase of life with special needs and challenges, skills and resources – but also give the latter space to develop for the benefit of society.

We want to get involved – based on facts and shared convictions – not least because the society needs our commitment. We

want to open new paths together with courage and confidence. We want to stand up for a diverse, enriching coexistence, a vibrant democracy and the preservation of natural resources. We support the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

We are, however, also open to impulses and new perspectives that arise from the courage and willingness to change of the younger generations. It is important to us that the next generations can shape their lives with trust and confidence. We want to hear and understand the expectations and concerns of young people; we want to accompany them on their journey with our experience and learn from them in the process.

What matters?

It depends on all of us!

Mannheim, 3 April 2025

*The English version of the “Mannheim Declaration” is generated with the support of artificial intelligence.*



## The 121 BAGSO associations (as of January 2025)

Alevitische Gemeinde Deutschland e.V. | Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bundesverband e.V. (AWO) | Arbeitsgemeinschaft SPD 60 plus | BDZ – Deutsche Zoll- und Finanzgewerkschaft – Ständiger Ausschuss Senioren | Betreuungswerk Post Postbank Telekom (BeW) | Bund Deutscher Amateurtheater e.V. (BDAT) | Bund Deutscher Forstleute (BDF) – Seniorenvertretung des BDF | Bund Deutscher Kriminalbeamter (bdk) | Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Landesseniorenvertretungen e.V. (BAG LSV) | Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Senior\*innenpolitik der Partei DIE LINKE | Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Seniorenbüros e.V. (BaS) | Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft *seniorTrainerin* (BAG sT) | Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung für Ältere (BAG WiWA) in der DGWF e.V. | Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wohnungsanpassung e.V. | Bundesarbeitskreis ARBEIT UND LEBEN e.V. | Bundesforum Katholische Seniorenarbeit (BfKS) | Bundesforum Männer – Interessenverband für Jungen, Männer & Väter e.V. | Bundesinteressenvertretung für alte und pflegebetroffene Menschen e.V. (BIVA-Pflegeschutzbund) | Bundesinteressenvertretung schwuler Senioren e.V. (BISS) | Bundesselbsthilfeverband für Osteoporose e.V. (BfO) | Bundesverband Gedächtnistraining e.V. (BVGT) | Bundesverband Geriatrie e.V. | Bundesverband GRÜNE ALTE (BvGA) | Bundesverband Information & Beratung für NS-Verfolgte e.V. | Bundesverband Liberale Senioren | Bundesverband Russischsprachiger Eltern e.V. (BVRE) | Bundesverband Seniorentanz e.V. (BVST) | Dachverband Lesben und Alter e.V. | Das Demographie Netzwerk e.V. (ddn) | dbb beamtenbund und tarifunion | DeJaK-Tomonokai e.V. (Deutsch-japanischer Verein für kultursensible Pflege) | DENISS e.V. – Deutsches Netzwerk der Interessenvertretungen von Senior-Studierenden | Deutsche Alzheimer Gesellschaft e.V. – Selbsthilfe Demenz | Deutsche Gesellschaft für AlterszahnMedizin e.V. (DGAZ) | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Hauswirtschaft e.V. (dgh) | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Palliativmedizin e.V. | Deutsche Justiz-Gewerkschaft (DJG) | Deutsche Landsenioren e.V. (DLS) | Deutsche PsychotherapeutenVereinigung e.V. (DPtV) | Deutsche Schmerzgesellschaft e.V. | Deutsche Steuer-Gewerkschaft – Bundesseniorenvertretung (DSTG) | Deutscher Akademikerinnenbund e.V. (DAB) | Deutscher Berufsverband für Soziale Arbeit e.V. – SeniorInnen-DBSH | Deutscher Blinden- und Sehbehindertenverband e.V. (DBSV) | Deutscher Bridge-Verband e.V. (DBV) | Deutscher BundeswehrVerband e.V. (DBwV) | Deutscher Evangelischer Frauenbund e.V. (DEF) | Deutscher Evangelischer Verband für Altenarbeit und Pflege e.V. (DEVAP) | Deutscher Frauenrat – Lobby der Frauen in Deutschland e.V. (DF) | Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) | Deutscher Olympischer Sportbund (DOSB) | Deutscher Schwerhörigenbund e.V. (DSB) | Deutscher Senioren Ring e.V. (DSR) | Deutscher Turner-Bund (DTB) | Deutscher Verein der Blinden und Sehbehinderten in Studium und Beruf e.V. (DVBS) | Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge e.V. (dv) | Deutsches Sozialwerk e.V. (DSW) | DPoIG Bundespolizeigewerkschaft | Eisenbahn- und Verkehrsgewerkschaft (EVG) | Evangelische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Altenarbeit in der EKD (EAfA) | Evangelische Erwachsenenbildung – Bundesverband e.V. (EEB) | Evangelisches Seniorenwerk – Bundesverband für Frauen und Männer im Ruhestand e.V. (ESW) | Familienbund der Katholiken (FDK) | FORUM

Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen e.V., Bundesvereinigung (FGW) | Freunde alter Menschen e.V. | FUSS e.V. – Fachverband Fußverkehr Deutschland | Generationsbrücke Deutschland | Gesellschaft für Gehirntaining e.V. (GfG) | GesundheitsAkademie e.V. | Gewerkschaft der Polizei (GdP) – Seniorengruppe (Bund) | Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft – BundesSeniorenAusschuss (GEW BSA) | Grüne Damen und Herren, Evangelische Kranken- und Alten-Hilfe e.V. (eKH) | Guttempler in Deutschland e.V. | Hartmannbund – Verband der Ärztinnen und Ärzte Deutschlands e.V. | Haus im Park der Körber-Stiftung | HelpAge Deutschland e.V. (HAD) | IG Bergbau, Chemie, Energie (IGBCE) | IG Metall | Industriegewerkschaft Bauen-Agrar-Umwelt (IG BAU) | Internationaler Bund (IB) Freier Träger der Jugend-, Sozial- und Bildungsarbeit e.V. | Katholische Arbeitnehmer-Bewegung Deutschlands e.V. (KAB) | Katholische Erwachsenenbildung Deutschland – Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft e.V. (KEB) | Katholische Frauengemeinschaft Deutschlands – Bundesverband e.V. (kfd) | Katholischer Deutscher Frauenbund e.V. (KDFB) | Kneipp-Bund e.V. | Kolpingwerk Deutschland | komba gewerkschaft – Gewerkschaft für den Kommunal- und Landesdienst | Kommunikationsgewerkschaft DPV (DPVKOM) | Kompetenzzentrum für Kulturelle Bildung im Alter und inklusive Kultur (kubia) | Lange Aktiv Bleiben Neu Wulmstorf e.V. | Malteser Hilfsdienst e.V. | Mediengemeinschaft für blinde, seh- und lesebehinderte Menschen e.V. (Medibus) | NaturFreunde Deutschlands e.V. – Verband für Umweltschutz, sanften Tourismus, Sport und Kultur | Netzwerk-Osteoporose e.V. | PRO RETINA Deutschland e.V. – Selbsthilfevereinigung von Menschen mit Netzhautdegenerationen | Radeln ohne Alter Deutschland e.V. (RoA) | Senior Experten Service (SES) – Stiftung der Deutschen Wirtschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH | Senioren-Union der CDU Deutschlands | Senioren-Union der CSU | Seniorpartner in School – Bundesverband e.V. (SiS) | Silbernetz e.V. | Sozialverband Deutschland e.V. (SoVD) | Sozialverband VdK Deutschland e.V. | Sozialwerk Berlin e.V. | Stiftung BSW (Bahn-Sozialwerk) | Stiftung der Deutschen Lions | Unionhilfswerk Landesverband Berlin e.V. | Verband Bildung und Erziehung e.V. (VBE) | Verband der Beamten und Beschäftigten der Bundeswehr e.V. (VBB) | Verband Wohneigentum e.V. | Verbraucherzentrale Nordrhein-Westfalen e.V. | ver.di – Vereinte Dienstleistungsgesellschaft e.V. | Verkehrsclub Deutschland e.V. (VCD) | Virchowbund, Verband der niedergelassenen Ärztinnen und Ärzte Deutschlands e.V. | Virtuelles und reales Lern- und Kompetenz-Netzwerk älterer Erwachsener e.V. (VILE) | Volkssolidarität Bundesverband e.V. (VS) | VRFF Die Mediengewerkschaft | wir pflegen – Interessenvertretung und Selbsthilfe pflegender Angehöriger e.V. | wohnen im eigentum – die wohneigentümer e.V. | Zentralwohlfahrtstelle der Juden in Deutschland e.V. (ZWST) | ZWAR e.V. – Zwischen Arbeit und Ruhestand

**More information: [www.bagso.de](http://www.bagso.de)**



**Published by**

**BAGSO**

**Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft  
der Seniorenorganisationen e. V.**

**German National Association of  
Senior Citizens' Organisations**

**Noeggerathstr. 49**

**53111 Bonn**

**Germany**

**Tel.: +49 (0)228 / 24 99 93-0**

**kontakt@bagso.de**

**www.bagso.de**

**instagram.com/bagso\_de**

**facebook.com/bagso.de**