EURASIAN DEMOGRAPHY'S TURNING POINT: WHY TURKIC STATES MUST LEAD ON ELDERLY RIGHTS

Teoman Ertuğrul TULUN

Analyst

Across Eurasia, and especially among the Turkic States, societies are experiencing a dramatic rise in their elderly populations □□□□□□ by increasing longevity and declining birth rates. This demographic transformation is unfolding with unprecedented speed and scale, creating urgent challenges and opportunities for policy innovation, social cohesion, and the advancement of rights protections both regionally and internationally.

Demographic Transformation in the Turkic States

Recent data by the World Bank and WHO show the pace and depth of demographic change in the Turkic States, especially Türkiye: in 2025, over 10% of Türkiyes population is aged 65+, a figure expected to reach 13.5% by 2030 and nearly 25% by 2050. Alongside falling birth rates and record-high median age, similar aging trends are emerging across regional partners. These developments reveal distinct vulnerabilities but also open a unique opportunity for the Turkic States to set new standards for institutional leadership in elderly rights and policy reform[1].

Socio-Economic and Rights-Based Challenges

As the Turkic States experience intensifying demographic aging, multiple socio-economic and rights-based challenges come to the fore. Without a dedicated international convention on elderly rights, national frameworks remain fragmented and insufficient. The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically exposed these legal and welfare gaps □□□□□□□ individuals endured higher rates of poverty, limited healthcare access, and age-based restrictions, all of which heightened their vulnerability in both institutional and community settings. These deficiencies highlight the urgent need for integrated rights protections and comprehensive social support, tailored to regional needs but aligned with global standards [2].

Why Turkic States Should Lead

The Turkic states' tradition of deep respect for elders, embodied in institutions such as the "aksakal" council, provides a culturally specific foundation for advancing the rights of elders. This foundation aligns with the concepts of balancing regional tradition, strategic autonomy, and active global participation that lie at the heart of AVİM's proposed "Constructive Eurasianism" approach. This fundamental approach is gradually shaping the guiding policies of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). Policy approaches rooted in regional tradition and oriented toward international leadership are strongly reflected in the objectives of the Turkic World Vision 2040 and other OTS strategic documents. These frameworks consistently advocate for models that blend cultural heritage with proactive global participation.

The concept of balancing regional tradition, strategic autonomy, and active global engagement □□□□□□□□ to frameworks such as 'Constructive Eurasianism' □□□□ gradually informed the Organization of Turkic States' guiding policies. Policy approaches rooted in regional tradition and oriented toward international leadership are strongly reflected in the goals of the Turkic World Vision 2040 and other OTS strategic documents. These frameworks consistently advocate models that blend cultural heritage with proactive global engagement.

These factors uniquely position the region not only to recognize, but to champion a new normative framework for elderly rights, leveraging the OTSs established consultative structures and shared values. Such leadership, as repeatedly emphasized at OTS summits, is both feasible and likely to impact future international standards of welfare and dignity for aging populations[3].

Policy Recommendations

To address this urgent agenda, the Organization of Turkic States should work toward establishing a unified regional framework for elderly rights, formally anchored in its already robust resilience and good governance priorities as articulated in the Turkic World Vision 2040. This process must involve the harmonization of national legal standards, the creation of consultative bodies inclusive of experts and stakeholders, and coordinated engagement with relevant international organizations to bridge global legal gaps. Taking leadership in this field would not only foster regional stability and social resilience, but also enhance the Turkic States standing in international institutions as advocates of rights-based, participatory governance[4].

Policy Signaling

The current demographic juncture places the Turkic States at a pivotal crossroads where coordinated action on elderly rights is no longer a choice, but a strategic necessity. By advancing a comprehensive framework that fuses cultural respect and good governance □□□□□□□□□□ the goals outlined in the Turkic World Vision 2040 and Türkiyes

National Action Plan □□□□ region has the opportunity to preempt future crises and institutional challenges posed by aging populations. Timely and forward-looking initiatives will not only fortify intergenerational solidarity within our societies but also elevate the standing of the Turkic States as global leaders in humane and participatory governance. This path will deliver benefits for social resilience, democratic legitimacy, and international reputation, positioning the region at the forefront of inclusive policy innovation[5].

*Picture: *Qakazistan History*

[1] United Nations Population Fund, Türkiye Country Office, Older persons thrive, countries thrive, last modified September 30, 2025, https://turkiye.unfpa.org/en/news/older-persons-thrive-countries-thrive ; World Health Organization, Ageing EURO, February 9, 2022, https://www.who.int/europe/health-topics/ageing.

[2] Bearing the brunt: The impact of COVID-19 on older people in the Eurasia and Middle East region, HelpAge International, accessed November 3, 2025, https://www.helpage.org/silo/files/covid19-impactemesummaryenglish.pdf ; Amnesty International, Why we need a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons, accessed November 3, 2025, https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ACT3081892024ENGLISH.pdf.

[3] Gabala Declaration of the Twelfth Summit of the Organization of Turkic States, October 7, 2025, https://turkicstates.org/u/gabala-declaration-.pdf ; Areas of Cooperation Detail: Political Cooperation, Council of Elders (CoE), Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı, accessed November 3, 2025, https://www.turkicstates.org/en/areas-of-cooperation-detail/1-political-cooperation.

[4] Pelin Musabay Baki, Turkic World Vision □□□□□ A Step Forward for the Resilience of Turkic Cooperation, Perceptions 27, no. 1 (2022): 37 □□□ ; Organization of Turkic States, Turkic World Vision 2040, November 12, 2021, https://www.turkicstates.org/en/news/turkic-world-vision-2040.

[5] Organization of Turkic States, Turkic World Vision 2040, November 12, 2021, https://www.turkicstates.org/en/news/turkic-world-vision-2040. ;Minister Derya Yanık Announced the Ageing Vision Document and the National Action Plan on the Rights of Older Persons, Ministry of Family and Social Services of Türkiye, April 28, 2023, https://www.aile.tr/eyhgm-en/haberler/minister-derya-yanik-announced-the-ageing-vision-document-and-the-national-action-plan-on-the-rights-of-older-persons/.

About the Author :

Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun is an analyst at Ankara-based think-tank Center for Eurasian Studies. Dr. Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun received his Ph.D. in Political Science and Public Administration from İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University in Ankara. His area of research include European Union Studies, Globalization, Xenophobia, Hate Speech Studies and International Relations.

To cite this article: TULUN, Teoman Ertuğrul. 2026. "EURASIAN DEMOGRAPHY'S TURNING POINT: WHY TURKIC STATES MUST LEAD ON ELDERLY RIGHTS." Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Commentary No.2025 / 52. November 21. Accessed November 20, 2026. https://avimbulten.org/public/en/Yorum/Eurasian-Demography-s-Turning-Point-Why-Turkic-States-Must-Lead-on-Elderly-Rights

Süleyman Nazif Sok. No: 12/B Daire 3-4 06550 Çankaya-ANKARA / TÜRKİYE
Tel: +90 (312) 438 50 23-24 • **Fax**: +90 (312) 438 50 26
@avimorgtr
https://www.facebook.com/avrasyaincelemelerimerkezi
E-Mail: info@avim.org.tr
http://avim.org.tr

© 2009-2025 Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM) All Rights Reserved