



AGE Platform Europe Statement at United Nations Multi-Stakeholder Meeting on the Human Rights of Older Persons

Session 1 – Limitations and gaps of selected human rights norms and obligations

29 August 2022

Thank you, Ms. Chair.

I am speaking on behalf of AGE Platform Europe, the largest EU network of organisations of and for older persons.

In the European Union, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically shed light on the so-called ‘vulnerabilities’ of older persons. It exposed ageism like never before: older persons suffered from isolation and loneliness, leading to mental health problems. Because of the reduction of staff in long-term care facilities, they experienced increased violence, abuse, and neglect. Online, older persons were the target of hate speech, even described as a burden to society.

Already depicted as a frail, vulnerable and homogeneous group, the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced stigmatisation of older persons and showed how our governments and institutions have failed in protecting and fulfilling their human rights. Yet this is nothing new. Older persons have faced age discrimination for years: inequality and discrimination in areas such as education, employment and living conditions; lack of full and effective participation in decision-making; inadequate income and pensions; lack of access to health and long-term care services; lack of support in emergency situations, including the current conflict in Ukraine, poverty; and social exclusion.

These challenges may be even worse for groups who face multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination such as older women, older Roma people, older LGBTI people and older persons with disabilities.

In the current international human rights framework, ageism is not explicitly recognised as a form of discrimination but falls under ‘*other status*’, limiting its enforcement in practice. States do not have explicit obligations to implement concrete measures to fight and eliminate ageism.

Let’s not wait for another pandemic to highlight and heighten the gaps and challenges that older persons face in their daily lives. Let’s work towards the drafting and adoption of a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons now.

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