DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

Online event "Promoting civil and political participation of older persons"

Part of the event series "An engaged civil society as engine for an age-friendly society: an international exchange"

18th April 2024, 14.30 to 16.30 CET, online via Zoom

Having a say in public decision-making, being able to access public goods and services as well as exercising one's right to vote are aspects that today are widely taken as a given. There are, however, also many barriers to civil and political participation; ageism and age discrimination being one of them. Processes for civil and political participation are not always designed in a way to ensure equal access. At the same time, there are many examples of structures and mechanisms to ensure the full enjoyment of civil and political rights by older persons.

Civil and political rights are among the best known human rights. They cover, for instance, the right to peaceful assembly, free expression and the right to vote as well as the freedom from discrimination. With the adoption of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) of the United Nations (UN) governments made a commitment to ensuring the full enjoyment of civil and political rights by older persons. This was reaffirmed in the most recent Ministerial Declaration on MIPAA for the region of the UN Economic Commission of Europe (UNECE), adopted in Rome in June 2022: "involving older persons and their organisations in a constructive and meaningful way in the law- and policymaking processes at all levels to ensure that their rights, needs, and interests are taken into account in policies, programmes, and laws that affect them".

Such commitments are important, as has been stated in the Declaration of the Joint Forum of Civil Society and Scientific Research, preceding the UNECE-Ministerial Conference in Rome in June 2022. Still, one might ask: How are they implemented at national and local level? It is one's immediate living environment in which people seek, as Eleanor Roosevelt observes*, "equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere*."

This online event will therefore showcase examples of how older persons exercise their right to civil and political participation in their neighbourhoods and communities. By exploring practices from several countries, the event aims to

respond to the following questions: What is the role of civil and political rights at the local level? What methods do older persons and their representative organisations use to claim their rights and influence decision-making in their neighbourhoods and communities? What lessons can be shared and how can these be transferred to the regional and international level?

This online event is the second event of the series entitled *"An engaged civil society as engine for an age-friendly society: an international exchange"*. The kick-off event in November 2023 was dedicated to the voice of older persons at the UN. It provided insights into the relevant processes, motivations for participation and methods to influence the work of the UN.

The series is primarily targeted to older persons' organisations and other civil society organisations interested in an exchange with peers from countries in the UNECE region[1]. It is also open to other stakeholders, e.g. government representatives, local authorities and academia interested in strengthening civil society participation, in particular in the context of the update of the Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) of MIPAA.

The programme will be published closer to the date.

Language: Conference languages will be English and German, with simultaneous interpretation.

Registration: Participation in the event is free of charge. As soon as the registration opens we will share the online registration form.

Organiser: Secretariat for International Policy on Ageing of BAGSO, the German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations

In cooperation with UNECE, NGO Committee on Ageing Geneva and AGE Platform Europe

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Contact

BAGSO – Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Seniorenorganisationen e. V.
www.bagso.de/english/, Ina Voelcker, international@bagso.de

[1] [1] UNECE's (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) major aim is to promote pan-European economic integration. UNECE includes 56 member States in Europe, North America and Asia.