

Building an Inclusive and Effective Process for the UN Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) on Older Persons

Position paper on priorities for the Organisational Session of the UN IGWG on Older Persons

AGE Platform Europe

4 February 2026

www.age-platform.eu

Key messages

1. **The Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) offers a unique opportunity to place the meaningful participation of older persons and civil society organisations (CSOs) at the heart of UN standard-setting**, drawing on established good practice and reinforcing the principle of “Nothing about us without us.”
2. **By dedicating its initial sessions to the conceptual foundations, guiding principles and scope of a future convention**, the IGWG can build on the existing body of work and create a coherent framework for effective negotiations.

More information

- GAROP paper on modalities for participation
- GAROP paper on conceptual basis of convention

1. Meaningful participation as a cornerstone of the IGWG

The creation of the IGWG represents an important moment to reaffirm the UN's commitment to **inclusive, participatory and rights-based standard-setting**. Ensuring the **meaningful and continuous involvement of older persons and their representative organisations** will be central to achieving this ambition.

The participation of older persons and CSOs throughout the IGWG process can:

- Enrich discussions with **lived experience and practical expertise**;
- Strengthen the **legitimacy, credibility and ownership** of outcomes;
- Support the development of a convention that is **responsive, implementable and grounded in reality**.

Meaningful participation can be fostered by ensuring that older persons and CSOs are actively involved across all stages of the IGWG's work, including:

- **All panels**, expert discussions and interactive dialogues;
- **Drafting groups** or other informal working formats;
- Regional and national **consultations**, where undertaken

The IGWG is well placed to draw inspiration from the process that led to the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).** That process demonstrated that structured and continuous involvement of civil society in drafting and decision-making contributes directly to the strength and clarity of international human rights instruments. In this context, the CRPD process included a decision encouraging Member States to involve persons with disabilities in their national delegations.

Building on this good practice, the IGWG could consider promoting a decision encouraging Member States to include older persons in their delegations, to support their participation financially and technically in Geneva, and to consult organisations of older persons at national level ahead of each IGWG session.

Aligning the IGWG's working methods with this established good practice would affirm the UN's commitment to the principle of **"Nothing about us without us"** and ensure that older persons are recognised as rights-holders and partners in the process.

Further practical reflections on modalities of participation are set out in the attached paper by the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older Persons (GAROP), which this position paper seeks to support and complement.

2. Establishing strong conceptual foundations from the outset

The early sessions of the IGWG provide an important opportunity to build a **shared vision** for a future UN convention on the rights of older persons. Focusing initially on conceptual foundations, guiding principles and scope can:

- Create a **common understanding** among Member States and stakeholders regarding the guiding principle, or principles, that should underpin all the treaty's contents;
- Directly influence **definitions** within the treaty, the treaty's **scope**, **structure** and how it is interpreted and implemented after adoption;
- Ensure **coherence** across future thematic or article-by-article negotiations;
- Support a **rights-based approach** that clearly articulates the added value of the convention.

This early work can be firmly grounded in the extensive discussions and outcomes of the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG),as well as the work of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Older Persons and regional bodies, which provide a strong evidentiary and normative basis for the IGWG's mandate.

GAROP's attached discussion paper offers some preliminary proposals on the conceptual basis of the future convention. This position paper underscores the importance of addressing these foundational issues early as a means of supporting a coherent and effective drafting process.

About AGE Platform Europe

AGE Platform Europe is the largest European network of non-profit organizations of and for older people. We elevate older people's voice, bringing their experience and aspirations to the table to celebrate ageing and fight for equality at all ages.

Contact

For more information, contact: Nena Georgantzi, Head of Advocacy, nena.georgantzi@age-platform.eu

Additional resources

- GAROP paper on modalities for participation
- GAROP paper on conceptual basis of convention

Av de Tervueren, Tervurenlaan 168, box 2 - 1150 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32.2.280.14.70
info@age-platform.eu

WWW.AGE-PLATFORM.EU

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Transparency Register ID: 16549972091-86