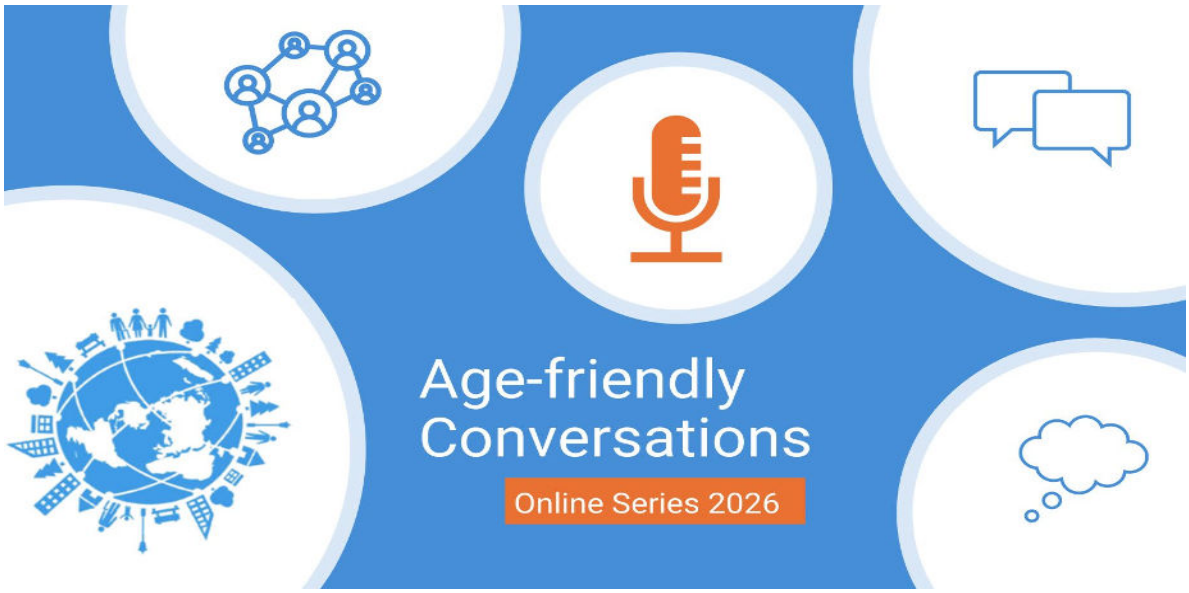


Concept note and speakers' information for the 1st Age-friendly Conversation

Theme: ***Human Rights of Older Persons and the Drafting of a UN Convention: Why Does It Matter for Advancing Equity in Age-Friendly Cities and Communities?***

Lead organiser: AGE Platform Europe

Date and time: March 26th, 2026, 15:00-16:30 CET

1. Context

The *Age-friendly Conversations* Online Series is an initiative by the Global Network on Age-Friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC) Secretariat that will provide a dynamic platform for interactive dialogue, meaningful debate, and collective reflection among members, affiliates and other partners interested in age-friendly goals.

Consisting of a set of online gatherings, the *Age-friendly Conversations* aim to expand awareness, inspire engagement, and mobilise action among GNAFCC members and affiliates around central themes. The series will serve as connective 'glue' to link diverse perspectives and insights across the Network, helping shape a shared vision for the evolution of the age-friendly framework.

The lead-up to the 3rd World Congress of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities provides important momentum for launching the series, with initial conversations centering on the Congress' key themes: Equity, Sustainability, and Connection.

In this first conversation, we will explore the theme of equity and its importance on creating and sustaining Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. We will place special attention to the connections between equity and rights, benefiting from this particularly timely moment with the process toward drafting a UN convention on the rights of older persons, now formally underway at the United Nations (UN).

With its mission to make cities and communities great places to grow old in—and to foster the full participation of older people in society—the GNAFCC is inherently aligned with the advancement of human rights. The year 2025 marked a landmark development: the UN Human Rights Council mandated the creation of an intergovernmental working group to draft a legally binding international instrument on the human rights of older persons.

This *Age-friendly Conversation* will take place roughly one month after the organisational meeting of the UN Intergovernmental Working Group happening in Geneva from 18–20 February 2026. The timing will allow key information to be shared with GNAFCC members and affiliates on the emerging process toward the convention, helping to catalyse more targeted opportunities for mobilisation and engagement.

2. Objective of the first Age-friendly Conversation

To provide a platform for discussion on the importance of the current momentum for older persons' rights, examine the role of GNAFCC, and identify ways the network can support and participate in the process.The conversation will explore how efforts to advance equity within age-friendly work intersect with the broader struggle for equal rights that drives advocacy for the UN convention.

3. Lead Network Affiliate organiser**:** AGE Platform Europe.

This first Age-friendly Conversation is organised in also collaboration with: Ina Voelcker (BAGSO, GAROP), Silvia Perel-Levin (NGO Committee on Ageing Geneva, INPEA, ILC GA, GAROP), Manuel Veguin (IMSERSO) and Pamela Suero (Society and Ageing Research Lab, VUB, HOMeAGE Network).

4. Audience / participants

The session welcomes members and affiliates of the Global Network on Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, as well as external partners engaged in or supporting age-friendly initiatives, policymakers, advocates, researchers, practitioners, and all those interested in equitable age friendly action and human rights in old age.

5. Guiding questions

- ***Context setting by Nena Georgantzi:***
    - How do efforts to enhance equity in age-friendly initiatives intersect with the pursuit of equal rights that motivates advocacy for a UN convention?
    - What is the current status of the convention drafting process, and what are the next steps?
    - Why is meaningful participation so important in this process, and how can GNAFCC members, affiliates, and external partners get involved and support this?
- ***Reflections and conversation by international panel:***
    - How are GNAFCC members, affiliates and external partners already engaging in human rights work and advocacy, and how can they further participate in the process toward the UN convention?
    - How would a UN convention on older persons' rights help advance equitable Age-Friendly Cities and Communities?
- ***Reactions by participants / comments from audience:***
    - What would GNAFCC members, affiliates and external partners like to see included in the text of the UN convention? What contents would be most important to advance age-friendly work?

5. Agenda structure

Moderator: Silvia Perel-Levin, *NGO Committee on Ageing, INPEA, GAROP*

Item	***Speakers and affiliations***	***Time***
Welcome	**Thiago Hérick de Sá**, *Global Network on Age-Friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC) Secretariat, WHO*	15:00
Interactive component – polls, cloud mapping, or initial discussion after a guiding question	Moderator	15:05
Brief framing presentation	**Nena Georgantzi**, *Head of Advocacy, AGE Platform Europe and Chair, Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP) Content Working Group (CWG)*	15:15
Discussion / reactions / Conversation	**Marjut Vuorela**, *Senior expert, Office of the Finnish Ombudsperson for Older People*	15:25
	Rayne Stroebel, Co-President, *International Longevity Centre (ILC) Global Alliance; Co-Director, ILC South Africa*	
	Alexandre Da Silva, *National Secretary of Human Rights of Older Persons, Brazil*	
Q&A or comments from audience	Moderator, audience, speakers	15:50
Closing reflections	**Manuel Veguín García**, *Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales (IMSERSO), España*	16:20

6. Speakers' information



Silvia Perel-Levin is an advocate for the human rights of older persons and an independent consultant. With over 25 years of experience in human rights, ageing, and health, she has worked with international organisations, including the World Health Organization (WHO). At the United Nations in Geneva, Silvia represents the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) and the International Longevity Centre Global Alliance (ILC GA). Silvia currently serves as Vice-Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing and is a member of the steering group of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP). She edited the book "Ageing of the Oppressed: A Pandemic of Intersecting Injustice". Silvia's contributions to global advocacy for older persons have earned her the Rosalie Wolf Award (2023) and the Julia Alvarez Award (2024). She holds a B.A. in Social and Educational Theatre and an M.Sc. in Inter-Professional Practice, Violence and Health.



Thiago Hérick de Sá leads WHO's work on age-friendly environments and coordinates the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, leading the support to cities and countries as well as the development of normative guidance (e.g., National programmes for age-friendly cities and communities) and capacity building efforts (e.g., Age-friendly World Resources). Previously, he worked on urban health, transport and planning at WHO. Earlier in his career, he was a public health researcher in Brazil and the UK, with a strong track record of publications in high-impact journals. He began his professional life as a physical educator working with older people in hospitals and primary care settings in Brazil. He holds a degree in Sports Science and a Master's and PhD in Public Health.



Nena Georgantzi, PhD has dedicated the past 15 years to advancing the human rights of older persons, working at the crossroads of research, policy, and advocacy. She leads advocacy at AGE Platform Europe, the largest EU network promoting older people's rights, and is Adjunct Lecturer at the University of Galway, where she earned her PhD on older persons' rights in Europe and the potential value of a UN convention. She is also co-founder of droitsdevant, a Belgian NGO using law to rethink ageing and tackle ageism. Her expertise has shaped international initiatives, from negotiating the Council of Europe's recommendation on older persons' rights to advising the UN Independent Expert on the rights of older persons, the UN Special Rapporteur on disability, and the International Labour Organization, and is instrumental in promoting the EU's rights-based approach to ageing. Deeply committed to global change, Nena plays an active role in shaping the forthcoming UN convention on the rights of older persons, having also served as Deputy Chair of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older Persons (GAROP) and currently chairing the GAROP Working Group developing content for the new UN convention. She has published widely on ageing, ageism and human rights. Originally from Greece, she now lives in Barcelona with her husband and two daughters.

Marjut Vuorela is the Senior expert and lawyer in the Office of the Ombudsman for Older People in Finland. The Office of Ombudsman promotes the position of older people in Finland and promotes the realisation of their fundamental and human rights.



Prof Rayne Stroebel is Co-President of the International Longevity Centre Global Alliance and Co-Director of ILC South Africa. He is a respected South African academic and thought leader in the fields of ageing, dementia care, and the rights of older persons. His work focuses on advancing age-friendly practice, human dignity, and equitable, relationship-directed support for older persons, while contributing an important African perspective to global dialogue on ageing and longevity.



Alexandre da Silva is the current National Secretary for the Rights of Older Persons at the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship of Brazil, a position he has held since 2023. At the same time, he serves as President of the National Council for the Rights of Older Persons (CNDPI) for the 2025–2027 term. With 27 years of experience dedicated to gerontology, his work spans care, teaching, research, activism, and public management. He has been a faculty member at the Jundiaí School of Medicine since 2017. His academic background includes a PhD in Public Health and a Master's degree in Rehabilitation, complemented by specializations in Gerontology, Public Management, and Bioenergetics. In public administration, he prioritises addressing ageism and its intersections with other forms of oppression, such as machismo/sexism, racism, ableism, LGBTphobia, and discrimination based on social class and place of residence. He is a strong advocate for the human rights of older persons, healthy ageing, the inclusion of ancestral knowledge and practices in contemporary society, and the expansion of social participation. He leads strategic programs such as Aging in the Territories and Live More Citizenship, as well as projects such as Dignified Life at Home, Education for the Whole of Life, and Live More Digital Citizenship. In addition, he works to strengthen the CNDPI and to advance discussions on ageing and the rights of older persons in Brazil and internationally through actions in forums such as the G20 and COP30, as well as through strategic partnerships with institutions.



Manuel Veguin is Head of International Relations at the Institute for Older People and Social Services (IMSERSO), the Spanish Government agency responsible for managing social services. In this role, he oversees the Institute's international relations and coordinates its Ibero-American Cooperation programs. Since 2025, he has served as Spain's national focal point in the UNECE Standing Working Group on Ageing in Geneva. He has been recently nominated as Second National Focal Point for drafting a Convention of Human Rights of Older Persons in the Intergovernmental Working Group in Geneva. He is also a member of the Senior Corps of Civil Administrators of the State.

7. Registration and platform details

This Age-friendly Conversation welcomes GNAFCC affiliates, members and external partners and other audiences interested in the human rights of older persons and the age-friendly framework. The session will be hosted by WHO's Zoom platform. Registration is available here.

8. Language considerations

This first Age-friendly Conversation is planned to be conducted in English. In addition, we will count with AI-assisted interpretation in all 6 UN official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish) plus Portuguese, Japanese, Korean and German.

9. Output: A brief summary of the reflections derived from this session will be generated for documentation and dissemination within a week or two.