

AGE Annual Conference 2026

“Lead with us”

Turning 25 Years of Advocacy into Action for the Rights of Older Persons

9 June 2026, 9:15-13:15

Hotel Park Inn Radisson

Martelarenlaan 36, 3010 Leuven, Belgium

Background

For 25 years, AGE Platform Europe (AGE) has worked to promote age equality and advance the rights of older persons across the European Union (EU). This ongoing work provides a strong foundation to contribute to global standard-setting and to ensure coherence between EU action and international human rights developments.

The adoption of the 2025 United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council Resolution (HRC) marked a pivotal step towards establishing a new UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons. As UN Member States, civil society and other stakeholders move towards intergovernmental negotiations, the focus is no longer only on *why* a Convention is needed, but on **how it will be shaped and how it will deliver real change in practice**.

This conference takes place at a critical moment, as the UN Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) mandated to elaborate a new legally binding instrument prepares to hold its first substantive session in July 2026. Building on AGE's 25 year-legacy, it will connect older people's voices and lived experience with concrete commitments by regional actors to support the Convention's development and implementation.

Expected outcomes

- **Older persons' voices visibly shape the discussion**, reinforcing their role as active rights holders and agents of change in the Convention process.
- **A shared understanding of the Convention's vision, principles and transformative potential**, including its impact on law, policy and societal perceptions of ageing.
- **Concrete commitments (pledges) from key actors**, marking the launch of an ongoing platform to track progress and sustain engagement beyond the conference.
- **Increased political momentum and stronger coordination among EU institutions, Member States and civil society**, with practical ideas for inclusive consultation and regional collaboration feeding into the drafting process.

Agenda

Conference host: Maciej Kucharczyk, Secretary General, AGE Platform Europe

9:15-9:30 – High-Level Address: *Leading with All Generations*

- Eva Schultz, Member of Cabinet, Executive Vice-President Roxana Mînzatu Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness, European Commission

9:30-9:55 - Opening Session

- Zvezdan Pirtošek, UN Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of All Human Rights by Older Persons
- H.E. Barbara Sušnik, Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to the Kingdom of Belgium
- Khaled Hassine, Secretary, IGWG on Human Rights of Older Persons

9:55-10:00 – Voices in Action I: Championing Change
Testimonies on how a UN convention will drive change in law, policy and society
- Merce Mas, FATEC, Spain
- Guido Cuyvers, Vlaamse oudenraaad, Belgium
- Theresia Degener, retired Professor of Law and Disability studies and former chair of UN CRPD Committee

10:00-10:10 – *Can I Retire Now?* Reflections on 25 Years of Ageing Research and Advocacy towards a new UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons
Keynote speech by Dr. Lucie Vidovićová, Masaryk University, CERA Centre for Research on Ageing

10:10 – 11:00 Roundtable 1: From Grassroots Voices to Global Norms
How older persons' voices and lived experiences can shape the development of the UN Convention, showcasing practical and inclusive approaches to participation.
Moderated by: Anna Chabiera, Expert, Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of Poland

- Miguel Angel Cabra de Luna, PMP, Spain
- Chris Serroyen, OKRA, Belgium
- Dr Caroline Emmer De Albuquerque Green, Oxford University, UK

11:00-11:30 – Break

11:30-11:35 – Voices in Action II: Championing Change
Testimonies on shaping the vision and principles of the convention to drive change in law, policy and society
- Maria Petkova, OWN Europe
- Mai Quaid, National President, Active Retirement Ireland
- Moira Allan, Old'Up, France
- Tania Scacchetti, General Secretary of the Italian Pensioners' Union

11:35-12:35 Roundtable 2: Regional Leadership in Action: Building Commitments Towards a UN Convention

How regional collaboration can support the development of the UN Convention and announcement of initial commitments by key actors, including a video-pledge by Manuel Venguin Garcia, Head of International Relations, IMSERSO
Moderated by: Ina Voelcker, Head of the Secretariat for International Policy on Ageing, BAGSO, Germany

- Christina Meinecke, Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the European Union (OHCHR)
- Idoia Mendia, MEP and Co-Chair of the European Parliament Intergenerational Forum Intergenerational Forum, Spain
- Christoph Angster, Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Austria

12:35-12:40 – Summary of the graphic recording by the artist, Silvia Alba

12:40-13:15 - Closing Session

- Mr. Drahoslav Stefanek, Chair of Council Working Party on Human Rights
- Susanne Knoefel, Head of Unit D1, Directorate General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission
- Heidrun Mollenkopf, President, AGE Platform Europe

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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.

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