



APRe! NATIONAL CONFERENCE - "FROM PANDEMIC TO INCLUSION"

Lisbon, 27 October 2020

APRe national conference - "From Pandemic to Inclusion" - was held in Lisbon on 27 October 2020. The proposal of this event was to discuss, reflect and problematize the situation of retired and older people in Portugal, at a time strongly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The eighth anniversary of APRe! was celebrated at this Conference as an example of resistance, considering public support for this meeting when the number of COVID-19 cases is increasing in Portugal, while a discourse of fear and appeal to confinement is proportionally growing and very often addressed to older people. The attendance format, complying with all sanitary regulations, was particularly valued by all participants. Live transmission [*] has enabled members and many other interested people to follow the whole conference online.

The event was praised by the President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. Although unable to attend it, the President was represented by one of his assessors and sent a video message reinforcing the important role that APRe! has been playing in Portuguese society, namely in the struggle for the rights of retired and older people.

The Minister of Labour, Solidarity, and Social Security, Ana Mendes Godinho, spoke at the opening session and highlighted the importance of keeping older people issues on the political agenda. She stated that the pandemic exposed and increased systemic fragilities on older people care, stressing the need for urgent attention.

The Conference also received a greeting from AGE Platform Europe, of which APRe! is a full member. In his video message, the President of AGE emphasized the importance of building inclusion in these challenging times, making the work of organizations like and APRe! and AGE even more relevant.

Subsequently, journalist Maria Flor Pedroso read the opening keynote speech written by Professor José Gil, philosopher, and retired university professor, absent for health reasons. Drawing from the main theme "On old age and old people", the audience was led by a deep, consistent and clear reflection on how older people are handled in contemporary societies, and reasons that explain how old age is currently perceived and lived by old people themselves as well as by other generations. An in-depth reflection from this brilliant Portuguese thinker that APRe! is proud to have welcomed in its conference.

On the 1st Panel, moderated by Maria Flor Pedroso, the speakers were Constantino Sakellarides and Manuel Sobrinho Simões, both nationally and internationally renowned medical doctors. Professor Sakellarides focused on the pandemic and how we have been

dealing with it, underlining relevant dimensions such as 'pandemic fatigue' and the fragile balance between protecting ourselves and living our lives. Professor Sobrinho Simões said that there is still much to be learned about this Covid-19 disease. Therefore, mediation on helping people to understand the actual situation without creating alarm or false expectations, is crucial. On the matter of ageing, he considers that we should care more about “stretching” quality of life instead of “stretching” living time.

The 2nd Panel was composed by Constança Paúl, psychologist, prominent researcher on the field of Gerontology and current leader of ActiveAdvice, and Pedro Adão e Silva, sociologist, professor of Political Science and Public Policies. Professor Paúl emphasized that great changes on how residential institutions for older people are conceived must be a political issue and cannot be postponed any longer. Professor Adão e Silva compared the current crisis with previous crises, analysing its present and future impacts on different age groups. This Panel was moderated by journalist Nicolau Santos.

Many members of APRe! participated in the debate. Nursing homes and training needs of formal and informal caregivers were the focus of interventions.

At the closing session, the President of the Board of APRe!, Maria do Rosário Gama took the floor, thanking all who attended the Conference as well as those who made it possible, namely the members of APRe! Lisbon Office. She said that the pandemic has disturbed APRe!'s activity, preventing many scheduled initiatives, but the Association does not give up and will continue to work hard as ever. To the question "What should be the role of retired people's association?", she replied that it should take on the role of building a space for debate and providing clarification on the rights of older persons. She also emphasised that vulnerability must not be a factor for discrimination against older people.

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https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=apre+delega%C3%A7%C3%A3o+de+lisboa