

Economic, social and cultural rights of older persons
*Strengthening the capacity of older persons
to advocate for their human rights*

18 October 2019, Brussels

Opening remarks
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Partners and friends, ladies, and gentlemen,

A warm welcome to this one-day training on the economic, social and cultural rights of older persons. As Regional Representative in Europe of the UN Human Rights Office, I am delighted that we have partnered again with AGE Platform Europe and jointly organized this workshop, aimed at strengthening the capacity of your organisations to advocate for the human rights of other older persons across Europe.

When we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights last year, many people referred to this seminal document in the human rights world as the ‘grand old lady’.

This was partly as a deferential reference to Ms. Eleanor Roosevelt, who chaired the drafting committee, and who was 64 years old when the Universal Declaration was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. But all commentators emphasized as well that the ‘grand old lady’ was as current and pertinent at age 70, as it was on the day it was proclaimed.

This applies to all of us. As stated in the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we are all born equal in dignity and rights. This should remain so during our entire life. Yet, with age, inequalities arise and it is sadly no surprise that the rallying cry of Age Platform’s latest campaign is #AgeingEqual.

Discrimination based on age, inadequate policies, insufficient protection, and a broader lack of consideration for the perspectives and concerns of older persons, result all too often in older persons being left behind, and not able to participate in, benefit from, and contribute to society, as both needed and desired.

Today, 200 million persons in Europe are 50 years old or over. It is anticipated that by 2050, persons aged 60 years and over will represent 35% of the whole European population. As people live longer, we have to make sure that their human rights continue to be protected.

Adequate standard of living, quality health care, non-discrimination in employment, life-long learning and social protection are all rights covered under the Covenant on Economic, social and cultural rights, which will be the focus of today's training. Human rights-based social and economic policies can help address the challenges faced by older persons in Europe, and ensure adequate protection for all and active contribution by everyone.

We count on your active contribution right here, right now, too! Together with our three trainers, Nena Georgantzi from AGE Platform, Seynabou Benga from Human Dignity, and Marie-Dominique Parent from UN Human Rights, you will hear, discuss and practice how economic and social challenges faced by older persons are framed in human rights terms, how you can leverage UN mechanisms to advance the rights of older persons, and why it matters.

The voice of older persons matter. Their equal rights too. At the UN Human Rights Regional Office for Europe, we look forward to continue working with AGE Platform to continue promoting both.

I wish you a very active and fruitful training. Thank you very much.