



7th July 2017

**Statement on violence, abuse and neglect
for the 8th Session of UN OEWG
by AGE Platform Europe**

Mr Chair, distinguished panelists,

Levels of prevalence of the different forms of abuse against older people are high also in Europe. According to the World Health Organization, abuse in Europe affects approximately 3% of older persons and up to 25% of those older persons with high care needs.

Abuse against older persons occurs in all settings and is the reflection of ageist attitudes towards older persons, seen as a burden, as inevitably frail and undeserving of dignified treatment. When it comes to older persons in need of care, elder abuse is also the result of the underdevelopment of care services and the lack of support for family and informal carers.

On the occasion of the World Elder Abuse Awareness day, last 15 June, the European Commissioner for Justice acknowledged that demographic ageing may increase the risk of elder abuse. Despite such acknowledgement and the gravity of the situation, we observe that there is overall a clear lack of governmental action in the European Union.

Gaps in legislation and policies are numerous. Today the vast majority of countries lack a definition of elder abuse in their legislation, which hinders the ability and undermines the willingness of governments to prevent and tackle it. This also means that older persons and their specific needs are not adequately included in existing policies and laws on violence and abuse, and this lack of awareness extends to law enforcement bodies, police and services to support victims, which are unable to offer victims of elder abuse the support, redress and protection they need and are entitled to.

Mr Chair,

Most EU countries provide little to no protection for the long-term care needs of older persons. Families find themselves in difficult situations where they need to offer almost all of care, with no or very little support. This situation puts older persons in need of care at a high risk of suffering abuse and violence.

There is no sufficient monitoring of the way policy reforms in other seemingly independent fields, such as pensions or support for the unemployed, hinder the access of older persons to quality care services. In some countries these have led to the withdrawal of older persons from care settings and created situations of isolation and inadequate care that put older people at an even higher risk of suffering abuse.



Mr Chair,

Gathering more data to get to know better the forms and prevalence of elder abuse is urgent. Governments should develop better quality monitoring mechanisms in care settings and sound methodologies of calculation of prevalence of elder abuse that can be comparable across countries. However, the little data available should be no excuse not to act: we know that elder abuse exists, just like gender-based violence or child abuse.

AGE believes that the right to freedom from abuse, violence and neglect must create the obligation to:

- define elder abuse and gather quality data
- implement awareness-raising and preventative actions, including relevant training for care professionals and support for informal and family carers
- establish mechanisms to monitor the impacts of all policy reforms on the access to quality care and the prevalence of abuse
- develop adequate protection and support for victims and provide redress

For more information, you may contact Borja Arrue Astrain, Project and Policy Officer responsible for long-term care and elder abuse at AGE Platform Europe, borja.arrue@age-platform.eu