



**Statement on the right to education, training, life-long learning  
and capacity-building  
for the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of UN OEWG on Ageing  
by AGE Platform Europe**

16 April 2019

Ms/Mr Chair,

The right to education is enshrined and protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent instruments. However, it is still not common to think the right to education in application to older people. More than with many other rights, it is more evident that pervasive ageist stereotypes exist not only with providers of education, but also for many older learners themselves. Besides the fact that education is a recognised human right, life-long learning is increasingly important in an age of digitalisation and profound shifts in the skills needed to fully participate in society.

Ms/Mr Chair,

Members of AGE Platform Europe welcome the substantial discussion on the right to education of ageing persons in this working group and wish to congratulate for the working document prepared by UN DESA. AGE members' experiences show that the right to education is far from being implemented for many older persons.



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In the EU, the legislative framework to guarantee the access to education for older persons is not fully developed. While vocational training is included in the material scope of the non-discrimination directive in employment, the same directive allows for unclear exemptions to this principle for 'vocational training objectives'. The low participation rate of older persons in life-long learning show the unequal outcomes for older persons. Access barriers also exist as many educational offers are available only in urban areas, to those who can register via the internet and those who have the means of transportation to get to offers. Some cases of direct discrimination in the access to scholarships or university education have been identified by AGE members.

Where educational offers are available, they are often mainly focussed on providing skills for the labour market, less so for life-long learning beyond retirement age.

Ms/Mr Chair,

Older persons' organisations are committed to the right to education and are providing educational programmes themselves in many cases. However, in economic crises, informal adult education is among the first sectors where public support is reduced. The lack of establishment of the adult education sector hampers the development of quality and accessibility standards. Education to older persons is often not seen as a right, but as nice-to-have.

Ms/Mr Chair,

Unfortunately, in many cases, including in Europe, providing education means preaching to the converted, enrolling mainly persons who have already reached a level of educational achievement. Given education is a universal human rights and the important benefits it has to enable older people to fully participate in society, more should be done to implement this commitment.