



**Statement on the right to social security and social protection,
including social protection floors
for the 10th Session of UN OEWG on Ageing
by AGE Platform Europe**

17 April 2019

Ms/Mr Chair,

We welcome the discussion on the right to social security and social protection, as both are important preconditions for fully participating in societies. We speak from the point of view of one of the most wealthy regions in the world, with high levels of equality. The rights to health care, minimum income and old-age income are recognised in regional and national instruments. Yet, there are gaps that our members have identified. It should be noted that very few EU member states have ratified the right to social protection of the European Social Charter.

Ms/Mr Chair,

While European pension systems have overall a universal ambition, they might fail to give access to older persons who do not fit expected life trajectories. Older refugees, for instance, might not have the right to access benefits, because they arrived in their host member state only at a later age and lost any entitlement prior to their forced displacement. Regarding health care, not all member



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states have accessible formal care services and the decentralisation of care has led to differing standards in different regions within some member states.

Ms/Mr Chair,

Regarding the adequacy of social protection, we should outline the high gender gap in pensions of 37%, showing that discrimination against women accumulated along the life-course acts against them. Poverty and social exclusion rates are higher for women than for men, and have been recently increasing again. As women live longer and spend a higher proportion of their life with a disability or health condition, they are more exposed to issues regarding access to health care. Also, many AGE member organisations have pointed out that minimum pension provisions are often insufficient to protect older persons from poverty and social exclusion. Changes in the provision of public services, including in the area of health and care, also have an often negative impact on how adequate a pension is.

Regarding family benefits, provisions to support informal carers, many of which are older women, with social protection, services or income support are developed only in a few member states.

Ms/Mr Chair,

Some EU states have good practices to inform citizens about their expected pension income, but for some this is much less clear. Many persons overestimate their income in old age and find themselves at a lower standard of living than they were expecting.

Ms/Mr Chair,

We fully support the idea of social protection as a right. While the principle of this right stands unchallenged, a rights-based approach would strengthen the case for inclusiveness, non-discrimination and monitoring of this right. We wish to underline that adequate social protection in old age is correlated with better health outcomes and enables older persons to take actively part and contribute to society.