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5th AGE Annual Conference

Wednesday, 7 June 2017, 10.00 - 18.00

Interpretation in English and French

Venue: Hotel HUSA President

44 Boulevard du Roi Albert II – 1000 Brussels,

www.husapresidentpark.com – Tel. +32 (0)2 203 20 20



Inequalities and abuse in old age: Time to Act!

“The impact of ageism should not be underestimated. Ageism is the root of the marginalization, social exclusion and isolation of older persons. It is also intimately linked to violence and abuse against them in public and private spheres as scapegoating and stereotyping nourish subconscious motives.”

Ms. Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, United Nations Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of All Human Rights by Older Persons

The right to be respected and treated with dignity, to take part and be included in society may seem straightforward to some people, but can be a real challenge for some older people. And this is all the more true in these tough times, when fundamental rights tend to be overshadowed by economic concerns and the persistency of the common challenges faced by the EU.

Nowadays more than ever it is important to create societies where everyone has a role to play, is valued and supported to lead an active and autonomous life regardless of age, gender, race or ethnic origin, religion, disability or sexual orientation. Dignity, solidarity and equality are both values and priorities for action.

To build a truly inclusive society for all ages and a safer future for all generations in Europe and in other parts of the world, everyone needs to be empowered to participate fully and enjoy life in full respect of their rights while fulfilling their duties and responsibilities.

Conference objectives

AGE Platform Europe’s annual conference seizes the momentum of European Commission’s year of actions on violence against women, the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and the



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growing acceptance within the EU that more needs to be done to ensure an equal protection of older people's rights and combat elder abuse. Building on AGE's policy work in these areas and aiming to collect experiences and views that will shape our future work, the event will bring together representatives of European Union countries, European institutions and civil society to discuss how human rights in old age can be materialised using the existing framework, and consider the added value of further measures, such as a new United Nations (UN) treaty.

The conference is intended to be as interactive and inclusive as possible allowing participants to take the floor and lead the discussions. This is why we only foresee very few introductory presentations. The two thematic sessions will include a moderated dialogue with a few panellists and an open debate with the participants. At the end of each session two rapporteurs - one representing the voice of older people and the other equipped with human rights expertise - will present the main substantive and normative issues discussed.

The conference concludes with a capacity-building session aiming to raise awareness among older people's organisations on how they can use the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) to advocate for their rights.

The outcomes of this conference will feed into AGE's work and will help frame the next steps of the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG), as well as action at national and EU level.



Draft Programme AGE Annual Conference 7 June 2017

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9.15 – 10.00: Registrations

10.00 – 10.15: Welcome by Marjan Sedmak, AGE President

10.15 – 11.15: Opening session

Moderator: Robin Allen QC, Cloisters

- Israel Doron, Head of the Department of Gerontology at University of Haifa, 30min incl. Q&A
- Ana Carla Pereira, Head of Unit C2 Modernisation of Social Protection Systems, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission and a representatives of DG Justice of the European Commission, 30 min incl. Q&A

11.15 – 11.45: Coffee break

Introduction to the two following thematic sessions

11.45 – 13.15: Thematic session 1: Equality and non-discrimination in old age

Moderator: Robin Allen QC, Cloisters

- Dr. Matthias von Schwanenflugel, Director General 'Demographic Change, Senior Citizens and Welfare, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany
- Bridget Sleaf, Senior Rights Policy Adviser, HelpAge International
- Anne Gaspard, Executive Director, Equinet

Interactive discussion with the panellists and participants

Rapporteurs: Dee Masters, Cloisters and an AGE member



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13.15 – 14.45: Lunch break

14.45 – 16.15: Thematic Session 2: Elder abuse, violence and neglect

Moderator: Bridget Penhale, University of East Anglia

- Jim Pearson, Director of Policy and Research, Alzheimer Scotland
- Claudia Mahler, Senior Researcher and Policy Adviser, German Institute for Human Rights
- Dr. Arianne van der Rijst, Ministry for Health, Wellbeing and Sports, Netherlands

Interactive discussion with the panellists and participants

Rapporteurs: Nevena Peneva, Fundamental Rights Agency and an AGE member

16.15 – 16.45: Coffee break

16.45 – 17.45: Training session: How older people and people with disabilities can work together using the UN Convention of Rights for Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) to drive change on the ground

Moderator, Anne-Sophie Parent, AGE Secretary General

- *Relevance of UNCPRD for older people - How they can use it in their advocacy and how they can work with organisations of people with disabilities at national and EU level:* Catherine Naughton, Director, European Disability Forum
- *Older people in the work of the Academic Network of European Disability:* Paula Pinto, ANED Research Team and University of Lisbon
- *Improving access to financial services and payment methods for older persons and people with disabilities – A Dutch case study:* Michiel van Doeveren, Senior policy advisor, De Nederlandsche Bank N.V.

Interactive discussion with participants

17.45 – 18.00: Closing remarks: Marjan Sedmak, AGE President

End of Conference



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Background information

Ageism and age discrimination

According to the World Health Organisation *“ageism is a widely prevalent and prejudicial attitude that stems from the assumption that age discrimination, and sometimes neglect and abuse of older persons is a social norm and therefore, acceptable. It is a reality in some form in all societies, and finds expression in individuals’ attitudes, institutional and policy practices, as well as media representation that devalue and exclude older persons”*.

Ageism shapes how older persons are treated and perceived by their societies, often building on negative connotations of old age with decline, uselessness and burden. It leads to discrimination in medical settings, workplaces, laws, the media, the economy and many other areas. At the same time discrimination on the basis of old age often remains unchallenged because ageism is pervasive and entrenched in our society and renders age based distinctions to be seen as normal or acceptable, instead of as breach of rights.

While the EU treaties give the Union the competence to fight age discrimination, the EU to date has only adopted the Employment Framework Directive, which prohibits discrimination in the workplace. Despite the Commission’s commitment to adopt the ‘horizontal’ equal treatment directive, which would cover access to goods and services, this piece of legislation is still stuck in negotiations, due to strong resistance from a few Member States. At UN level discrimination on the basis of age is not explicitly prohibited in most human rights treaties, with the exception of the International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families.

Age limits are widely used even though they limit older persons’ potential, impact their health and well-being and hinder their contributions to social, economic, cultural and political life. Discussing ageism and discrimination is therefore crucial in order to ensure that the rights everyone has do not diminish nor become less important with age and to empower and encourage older people to participate, contribute to and benefit from their societies.

The conference will showcase experiences of age discrimination by older people and their impact in their everyday lives. It will moreover discuss when differential treatment on the basis of age is acceptable and when it is a breach of the dignity of older persons. In addition, it will offer an opportunity to discuss how to promote equality in old age and how the existing protection gaps can be filled.

Violence against women and elder abuse

The European Commission, lead by Věra Jourová, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, has taken the initiative to dedicate [2017 to combating violence against](#)



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[women](#). AGE Platform Europe has joined the [European coalition to end violence against women and girls](#), a network of more than 25 Europe-wide NGOs, which work together to ensure that the EU signs and ratifies the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, the [Istanbul Convention](#).

Although the fight to end violence against women is hugely important at the same time elder abuse is a topic that is often overlooked in studies and policies on gender-based violence, which results in under-reporting and inadequate response. For example a recent Fundamental Rights Agency survey on violence against women stopped at the age of 74, failing to reflect the experiences of older women who may suffer from violence at the intersection of gender and old age¹.

The [World Elder Abuse Awareness Day](#) celebrated every year on the 15th June is an opportunity to voice the world's *"opposition to the abuse and suffering inflicted to some of our older generations"*. Elder abuse is not a minor or anecdotal phenomenon, but a widespread violation of the human rights and dignity of older persons, especially those in situations of dependency and with care needs. Persistent ageist attitudes, demographic ageing and increasing financial pressures on care systems are very likely to make elder abuse even more prevalent in the near future in Europe.

Given the very high levels of underreporting, there is an urgency to ensure that victim protection mechanisms can become more effective and reflect the realities faced by older persons who are victims of violence, abuse and exploitation. The implementation of the [2012 European Union Directive on Victims' Rights](#) provides an excellent opportunity in that regard. It can serve as a new platform to facilitate the exchange of information and practices between victim support services, police and court practitioners and older persons and their organisations.

The conference aims to discuss concrete action to fight elder abuse and offers an opportunity to build on past work and events we have coordinated with the support of DG Justice, in particular on the rights of older people in need of care and assistance, victims' rights and the prevention of elder abuse.

Exploring the added value of a new UN convention

The past years we have witnessed a shift in the discourse on ageing from a purely socio-economic to a human rights approach. Instrumental in this shift has been the establishment of the United Nations (UN) [Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing](#) (OEWG), which is a group of Member States and civil society, mandated to consider the international framework on the human rights of older persons, to identify possible gaps and how to best address them, including by assessing the feasibility of adopting further instruments. Moreover, the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons (the IE) has

¹ <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/violence-against-women-eu-wide-survey-main-results-report>



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reviewed the state of protection of older people's rights and has highlighted the failure of the existing framework to adequately protect older people's rights. As a result, she is asking States "[to consider the various proposals that have been made, notably the elaboration of a convention on the rights of older persons](#)".

Across the EU there is also increased recognition that more needs to be done for older people's rights, including by considering the adoption of a new international legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons (i.e. Convention). In 2016 a [conference organised in Slovenia](#) and an [event at the European Parliament](#) initiated a European debate and mobilized national representatives, MEPs and civil society to be more constructively engaged in the international discussions regarding the content of a new convention. The [European Parliament](#) also called on the EU and its Member States "*to be actively involved in the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing and to step up their efforts to protect and promote the rights of older people, including by considering the elaboration of a new legal instrument*". Additionally, the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), which brings together the independent bodies that advise EU governments on issues of human rights, supports the elaboration of a new UN Convention for older people, is undertaking a project on the rights of older people in care settings and is actively involved in the international scene.

States and NGOs participating in the [7th session of the OEWG](#) in December 2016 recognised the need to discuss the possible content of a new international instrument, in order to make an informed decision about drafting a new convention. The next OEWG meeting scheduled for July-August 2017 will discuss the issues of (i) *equality and non-discrimination* and (ii) *violence, abuse and neglect*, considering what might be included in a new UN instrument.

To provide an EU-wide perspective to this debate AGE Platform Europe's annual conference 2017 will focus on what governments can do differently to ensure equality in older age and tackle elder abuse, which issues require particular attention and how these might be included in a new international instrument.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) is the first international legally binding instrument setting minimum standards for rights for people with disabilities, and the first human rights convention to which the EU has become a party. This means that the EU as well as those Member States that have ratified the UN Convention (i.e. all with the exception of Ireland) are committed to upholding and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities as enshrined in the UN Convention.

While not all older people are persons with disabilities, the likelihood of acquiring a disability increases with age. For the purposes of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with



Disabilities (CRPD), a person with a disability is not only someone with a disability card or a specific handicap. Older people who become frail and need support, for instance because of mobility constraints or because of a cognitive decline, like old age dementia, fall under the wider conception of persons with disabilities and can benefit from the protection of the convention. This presents an important advocacy avenue for organisations of older persons, who should not hesitate to take advantage of the protections of the CRPD to advocate for challenges related to functional limitations or support needs that people face as they age. In fact, under this convention, disability is no longer a stigmatising concept linked to a medical condition. On the contrary the CRPD abandoned the medical approach to disability; in other words for someone to fall under the scope of the convention it suffices to lack equal and full participation in society due to a long-term impairment or limitations in daily activities. This is why most older people could fall in the remit of the CRPD, precisely because they face such challenges, even if they do not suffer from a specific disability.

Our training session will explore the impact this convention has had on the lives of people with disabilities on the ground and how it has been used by disability organisations to call for better policies at national and EU level. It will moreover discuss how older people can benefit from the CRPD and which are some of the tools that they can use in their advocacy. In addition, it will provide a platform of exchange on how older people's and disability organisations can work together using the CRPD as a frame for their common action.