



**PRESS RELEASE**

Brussels, 16 October 2018

*International Day for the Eradication of Poverty*

## **Poverty, social exclusion, loneliness and isolation in old age are all denials of human rights**

---

**Ahead of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 17 October, AGE Platform Europe wishes to remind decision-makers about the increasing precariousness and social exclusion of the most disadvantaged and invisible older people, leading to the violation of their right to live in dignity and fully participate in society. While we are celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we cannot accept that human rights diminish with age!**

Over the last decade following the financial, economic and social crisis inequalities have grown further and various population groups are struggling to live a decent and dignified life, among whom many older people. While Eurostat figures show that the overall poverty rates for the population 65+ have been declining, the social realities of older women in particular those living alone, older migrants and elders of ethnic minorities and the 'oldest old', have on the contrary worsened. Budgetary cuts are preventing them from enjoying their human rights. This is true also in member states with the most generous welfare systems.

***Let's take a concrete illustration...*** says Anne-Sophie Parent, Secretary General of AGE Platform, ***"... with the rising out-of-pocket costs that older people have to pay for health and long-term care, older women's risk of poverty is further increasing. Women live longer and spend a larger proportion of their lives in poor health or with various disabling impairments, compared to men. Yet, the EU average pension gap is 40%, most women have a much lower pension than men. As a consequence, many of them slip into poverty and social exclusion."*** AGE urges member states to address the specificity of older women and men's poverty when preparing an EU post-2020 social agenda. The EU post 2020 agenda should build on both the Pillar of social rights and the objective 1 'no poverty' of the Sustainable Agenda 2030. The Pillar contains a reference to old-age income and pensions, according to which *everyone* in old age has the *right* to resources that ensure living in dignity.

Looking beyond the lack of material resources, the growing loneliness and social isolation in old age are other striking examples of blatant denial of human rights. ***‘Research shows that loneliness, depression and social isolation kill more older people than obesity! It is of our common responsibility as public authorities, health and social actors, local communities, families and individuals to act. Preventing older people from emotional and mental suffering or from social isolation is a matter of respecting human rights for people getting older’***, concludes Ebbe Johansen, AGE President. Equal access for people of all ages to essential services such as mental health care is essential and there should not be age limits in access to mental health as we see in some countries! Furthermore fostering meaningful participation of older people in society requires measures to support equal access for people of all ages to civic rights, leisure, culture, mobility and social networks. AGE campaign [#AgeingEqual](#) aims to raise awareness on ageism and to promote respect for economic, social and cultural rights in old age as enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

END

**Useful resources:**

- AGE Campaign blog: [ageing-equal.org](http://ageing-equal.org)
- More about [AGE’s work on adequate income and gender equality](#)
- More about [AGE’s work on the fight against poverty and social exclusion in old age](#)

**Note to the editor**

**About AGE Platform Europe:**



AGE is a European network of organisations of and for people aged 50+ aiming to voice and promote the interests of the 190 million citizens aged 50+ in the European Union and to raise awareness of the issues that concern them most. [www.age-platform.eu](http://www.age-platform.eu)

**For more information, please contact:**

Anne Mélard  
Information and Communication Officer  
[anne.melard@age-platform.eu](mailto:anne.melard@age-platform.eu)  
Tel: +32 2 280 14 70  
[www.age-platform.eu](http://www.age-platform.eu)



AGE policy work is co-funded by the **Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme** of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of AGE Platform Europe and ENNHRI and cannot be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.