



PRESS RELEASE

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International Women's Day

Too old for sexual life?

Does our right to equal treatment have an “expiry date”? Though in principle the answer is “no”, the reality in many EU countries is a different story. This is even more so for many older women who face multiple discrimination-based age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability or sexual orientation.

“It should not be forgotten that at the time of the operation the plaintiff was already 50 years old and had two children, that is, an age when sex is not as important as in younger years, its significance diminishing with age”.

Surprised? Shocked? The above rationale was used in 2017 by the Portuguese Supreme Court to justify the reduction of damage awarded to Ms Carvalho Pinto de Sousa while she was enduring intense and disabling pain following an operation, where a part of her sexual organs was removed by mistake. This judgement was somehow corrected later by the European Court of Human Rights on the ground of sexism, yet with no recognition of the additional ageist character of the argument.

The above case is one of the multiple examples of the double harm done to older women who face the accumulated effects of sexism and ageism. It illustrates how sexual and reproductive health rights of older women are overlooked in *addition to other gender inequalities in their social and economic life.*

At the same occasion, AGE takes the opportunity to remind the lack of disaggregated statistical data to adequately reflect the situation of women in older age. Even the ambitious Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development might fail to fill this gap, if we consider the very few indicators currently available on older women.

“Gender abuse and discrimination over the lifecycle lead to greater inequalities, vulnerability and poverty in old age. Our policies must address these specific challenges women face if we want to achieve equality for women and men throughout their lives”, concluded Heidrun Mollenkopf, AGE Vice-President.

Useful links

- 'Do older women have the right to sex?': <https://ageing-equal.org/do-older-women-have-the-right-to-sex/>
- WHO Regional Office for Europe, "Ageing and Sexual Health", 2013 - http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/183448/Entre-Nous-77-Eng.pdf
- Ageing Equal Campaign, <https://ageing-equal.org/ageism-and-gender/>
- AGE web page on gender equality: <https://www.age-platform.eu/policy-work/gender-equality-old-age>

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

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