

Mr. Chair,

Thank you and the panelists for your and their contributions and for this opportunity to address the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing.

In addition to the statement of Hungary on behalf of the European Union and underlining that statement I have a question.

In the meeting till up now I hear a lot of statements about "the" older person.

There are references to the discrimination or the double discrimination of "the" older person. We talk about the invisibility of "the" older person and about abuse of "the" older person. I think there is a risk that we do stereotype people.

You must know that in the Netherlands older people have a better income position than the average citizens. The health situation is also quite good when compared with a lot of other countries.

People don't feel vulnerable because of the simple fact that they are 40, 50, 60 or 70 years old, or what age you might chose as a definition of being old. What we observe is, that older people do not like the label of being old. They don't picture themselves as such. They don't want to see themselves as possible victims. They are just people with responsibilities, sometimes as employees, sometimes as volunteers, sometimes as informal cares, sometimes as people with a business of their own. They participate in society.

I do not say that the Netherlands is a paradise. It is not. Paradises are not found in this world. But the stereotype, that being old means that you are in need of specific rights simply doesn't live in the Netherlands.

If there is a change in paradigm's, it is not from "welfare" to "rights". It is more from "special" to "mainstream". It is from "rights" to "participation". It is from "the leisure-generation" to "solidarity between generations".

In the Netherlands things as poverty, abuse and discrimination do exist. We deplore that and we have a lot of legislation and actions to fight it. We will answer the questionnaire of the High Commissioner for Human Rights about the relevant legislation and actions.

But the idea is that these bad and sad affairs do not happen because a person has a certain age. They happen in combination with the fact that a person is vulnerable, in bad health, poor, disabled or badly educated.

The question is, doesn't the emphasis on age distracts us from these real problems? That is our impression, but maybe we are wrong,

Thank you.

Kind regards,

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