



Written statement by AGE Platform Europe¹

Discussion of normative elements of the right to social security and social protection, including social protection floors

at the United Nations General Assembly Open-Ended Working Group for the purpose of strengthening the protection of human rights of older persons -- 11th session

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The right to social protection is fundamental to all persons, and **older persons in particular are more likely to face needs for health, of course pensions**. The OHCHR analytical study outlines ILO conventions and guidance by human rights treaty bodies, indicating that these tend to be rather implemented as recommendations than as nationally binding law.

High and increasing rates of poverty and social exclusion persist among older persons in the EU, particularly among older women² and the oldest old. The cost of health and long-term often is higher than pensions, reducing the role of social protection to provide for an adequate standard of living. **Gaps in coverage** exist for older migrants, self-employed, persons with disabilities and Roma. **Lack of support for informal carers** trigger their exclusion from the labour market, higher levels of poverty and social exclusion, lower mental and physical health and risk of isolation. **Different pension ages for men and for women** can lock older women into situations with low income nor access to the labour market.

A right to social protection for older persons would, as indicated by OHCHR, **update and reinforce existing provisions in the context of increased longevity**. It should give **impetus to close gaps in coverage and address problems of adequacy**, such as preventing the erosion of pension adequacy due low benefits and lack of appropriate indexation. It would provide benchmarks for pension adequacy against the at-risk of poverty threshold, but also against the actual cost of maintaining an adequate standard of living considering health and long-term care needs. It would address the lack of consideration for informal and family carers in social protection and address inadequate pensions of older women due to career breaks for unpaid care, promoting the introduction or reevaluation of pension credits for care. It would address access to information about old-age social protection entitlements and establish the right to long-term care and support explicitly, rather than only as an extension of the right to health. It would address issues of access and administrative, geographical or other barriers specific to older persons. Pension reforms have changed rapidly the conditions for accessing rights without giving rights-olders the opportunity to adapt to it; a right to social

¹ AGE Platform Europe is a European network of not-for-profit organisations of and for older persons with members in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. AGE is also composed of European federations: European Senior Citizens' Union, European Senior's Organisation, Fédération Internationale des Associations des Personnes Agées, Nordic Older People's Organisation, Older Women's Network Europe and European Ageing Network.

² The gender pension gap in the EU is of 30% and the gap in poverty and social exclusion rates among older men and women is of 12 percentage points.





protection should therefore include a principle of progressive adaptation and consultation of older persons' organisations.

The right to social protection is highly dependent on other rights, such as the right to access the labour market, giving rise to contributory benefits. The right to independence and autonomy, the right to education and life-long learning and the right to an accessibility and reasonable accommodation are prerequisites for accessing social protection benefits. Adequacy of social protection determines the realisation of an adequate standard of living, the right to health, long-term care and support and to live independently. Long-term care and support is also a precondition for informal carers to access the labour market.

A Convention on the rights of older persons would protect the right to social protection and these interdependencies with other rights.

