

Older Women's Network, Europe

Oral statement OEWGA 11: 31 March, 10.00 – 12.00

Right to Work and access to the labour market

Madam Chair, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Everyone has the right to work.

However this right is not being enjoyed by all equally.

Employers often have negative attitudes towards older workers with age discrimination persisting even though older women and men are not necessarily less healthy, less educated, less skilful or productive than their younger counterparts.

Stereotyping and prejudice, that are not recognised and thus not challenged in today's digital world, may result in generational segregation naturalizing youth as digitally adept and the old as digital incompetent. Stereotypes about older persons often intersect with gender stereotypes, making discrimination in the labour market particularly severe for older women.

This is developing in a context where research has shown that a diverse workplace allows for more ideas and processes. In fact, a 2020 OECD study found that investing in multi-generational workforces will raise GDP per capita by almost 19% in three decades.

Legal barriers and disincentives to the employment of older persons should be removed. Moreover, it should be recognised that the increasing older women's shouldering of care responsibilities, for their grandchildren and dependent relatives, constitutes a barrier to being active in the labour market. Flexibility at the workplace together with remote working should continue to be developed and made available to all workers ensuring that care responsibilities are shouldered by both men and women. Part time work is another option for all workers to develop a work life balance.

The gender pay gap needs to be addressed in a context of transparency as this results in the gender pension gap with women, that suffer discrimination or lack of flexibility at the workplace at a younger age, ending up at risk of poverty as they grow older and more dependent than

their male counterparts. In 2018, women in the European Union aged over 65 received a pension that was on average 30% lower than that of men.

Affordable life long education and upskilling of workers abilities have become vital for workers of all ages particularly in an ever changing digitalised world.

OWN Europe urges the development of an international legal framework to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons in all sectors of society in the shortest timeframe possible.