

Global Seniors respond to question 2:

What are the challenges and barriers faced by older persons for the realization of their right to accessibility, infrastructure use and habitat (transport, housing and access) at the national and international levels?

Accessibility:

The municipality of Copenhagen offers skating rinks, ball cages and playgrounds for children. While this may be good for the respective younger target groups, it excludes older people and the interaction between generations is reduced. Further, Copenhagen has a strong focus on bicycle paths, and although this focus is great for the younger generation and for the environment, the hectic pace on the bicycle lanes frightens older people that give up the bicycle too soon.

The pavements are crabbed with parked bicycles, business stalls, café tables and other items. The pavements and streets are not maintained sufficiently.¹

Recommendations:

- Pedestrian strategies should be inclusive of older persons; pavements, streets and bicycle paths should be maintained to prevent older persons from falling and breaking arms and legs.
- Older persons should have the possibility to move around freely and safe in the cities. This requires a cooperation among the technical and the health administration in the municipalities

Digitilisation:

Denmark is a highly digitalized country, however 20 – 25 % of the adult population is challenged by the digitalization.² Thus, older persons also face a challenge due to lack of technological skills, they depend on younger relatives or others who can assist them.

The older persons find that the language in the communication from the public sector is complicated or in other language than mother tongue (Danish).

Only 48 % of those aged 75-89 years were in 2020 on the internet daily, while 66 % have access to the internet at home. Approximately 331.000 citizens – of all ages - are exempted from using Digital Post, when communicating with the public sector.³

¹ Observations carried out by Global Seniors and presented to the Mayors of Copenhagen Municipality in 2022 at a public meeting

² Justitias Rapport: Retssikkerhed for digitalt udsatte borgere 2022

³ Justitias Rapport: Retssikkerhed for digitalt udsatte borgere 2022

Older persons with little education experience a digital exclusion and marginalization that often lead to isolation and loss of rights in a highly digitalized society.

Recommendations:

- Digital public self-service systems should be voluntary and not a duty.
- Public authorities must demand that companies develop user-friendly systems for all citizens and citizens should be included in the process.

Housing

The official Danish policy regarding housing for older persons is “Remain in your home as long as possible”. While this is desirable for most people⁴, the consequence is that accessing an affordable house is difficult. Affordable housing in the cities is scarce. For older persons the size of the house, the interior design, access to community life and proximity to family is important.⁵

Resourceful older persons are on their own initiative moving from larger to smaller houses with conveniences like elevators, balconies etc.

However, there is also a group of older persons who don't have the financial resources to choose this option, and they remain in the old houses with no elevator or other facilities for older persons.

Recommendations:

- Build more affordable houses in the cities
- Request more affordable rental houses, including for senior, when designing large-scale housing

Public transportation

The public transportation plays a decisive role, especially for older persons, because it is often the only way to get around and take part in social life.

Copenhagen is one of the cities with least accessibility to public transport. There is no assistance to handicapped and older persons who have challenges walking when we get on

⁴ Alderens mangfoldighed (The diversity of Age), Fremtidsstudiet 2021, Future Study 2021, Ældre Sagen (Dane Age)

⁵ Alderens mangfoldighed (The diversity of Age), Fremtidsstudiet 2021, Future Study 2021, Ældre Sagen (Dane Age)

and off busses etc. ramps are not available.⁶ Digitalization of tickets constitute a problem for older persons, and altogether this means that many older persons do not use the public transportation and remain in their homes.

The rural districts have a poor coverage of public transportation. Bus lines are being shut down many places so that there is no access to public transportation. For many older persons this means lack of access to shopping and isolation from social life in the neighborhood.

Recommendations:

- Prioritize accessibility for children, older and handicapped persons when planning public transportation
- Simplify ticket systems for all users

⁶ "Busser for alle", En undersøgelse af bevægelseshandicap og kollektiv bustransport, Dansk Institut for menneskerettigheder, April 2021

"Busses for everyone". An investigation of handicap and collective bus transport. Danish Institute for Human Rights