



Alzheimer's Disease International

The global voice on dementia

Twelfth Session of the Working Group on Ageing for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons

The following statement was submitted under the respective agenda item: Right to work and access to the labor market

Discrimination of older people in the workplace is well known and widespread. While dementia is not a normal part of ageing, age is the biggest risk factor for developing the condition. Ageism, in combination with the stigma and lack of awareness associated with dementia, mean that many feel unable to continue in their current working environment. A personal testimony included within our World Alzheimer Report 2021: Journey through the diagnosis of dementia attests to this very point, as well as the implications to wellbeing.

"I am 65 years old and was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2015, when I was 59 years old. I was made to feel useless and had to quit my job" José Antonio García, Spain

Dementia is considered a disability under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and thus should be protected under employment law, allowing those living with the condition to remain in work for as long as possible, with reasonable accommodations implemented. The advantages of this are several fold, allowing those living with dementia to retain a level of independence, a sense of contribution, both personally and to the economy, and to maintain relationships with colleagues, can lessen feelings of isolation and depression often experienced after a diagnosis and improve overall wellbeing. To add to this, employment frequently comes with healthcare or other rights which are lost when leaving an occupation, at a time when arguably they are most needed. A more flexible approach to employment, post diagnosis, would also benefit the employer, allowing them to retain and build on their investment in an employee, utilising their training and experience.

The implementation of more dynamic and flexible employment policies will become increasingly important as we move towards the middle of the century. Currently 55 million people are living with dementia, a number expected to rise to 138 million by 2050. In addition to this, we are also observing an increased number of people developing younger-onset dementia, many of whom are providing fiscal contributions to the household, paying mortgages and other commitments, and many areas are also carers themselves. It is for this reason that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on accommodating those living with dementia in the workplace. We are already observing increasing numbers of employers becoming 'dementia friendly' but this must be expanded further through the implementation of legal obligations for employers.

Rights and employment law for those living with dementia should also include provisions for carers. Care is frequently provided 'informally' by family and friends, which disproportionately falls to women (Women and Dementia, 2015). In 2015, Alzheimer's Disease International estimated that the annual global number of informal care hours provided to people with dementia living at home was about 82 billion. This is the equivalent of more than 40 million full-time workers, a figure that will increase to 65 million full-time workers by 2030. The



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enshrinement of carers rights in relevant declarations or legal frameworks, will better equip those with caring responsibilities to continue or pursue a career, or even their education, and encourage employers to accommodate them within the workplace, through job sharing schemes or flexible working arrangements. Dementia currently costs the global economy USD \$1.3 trillion, which is expected to double to USD \$2.8 trillion by 2030, 40% of those costs are attributed to informal care. Collectively encouraging those living with dementia and carers to remain in employment for as long as they feel able to, will have a profound impact on their physical, mental and social wellbeing, as well as to wider society.