



The International Federation of the Associations of the Elderly (FIAPA) defends older persons' rights to dignity, consent and citizenship; promotes an inclusive society in accord with the challenges of individual and societal ageing and supports a necessary change in paradigm.

In fact, "a waking up" among citizens at large is indispensable for the success of sustainable policies in the areas of work and wellbeing that would be beneficial for present and future generations.

We have been campaigning - for the last 40 years - to improve the public social care policies towards the most vulnerable and to evolve the social and legal protection of the older person.

So far, the European Union has approved and promoted policies and directives in the area of work, whilst the country members of the EU are sovereigns in their territories. This means that country members are free and responsible to apply the EU frameworks to their specificities.

Today, the reality is that senior workers - perceived as less flexible, not up to date with recent technology, or "not in physical shape" - face discrimination in the labour market.

Age discrimination in the labour market, intense and increased pressure to care for family members, poverty and social exclusion is the daily reality of many older persons - especially women.

The EU Directive 2000/78/CE constitutes a general framework for non-discrimination at work - with age being a factor of non-discrimination.

Today, its application by member states - creating and allowing exceptions linked to age - create confusion as to what is legally discriminatory. For instance, in the area of professional training, the right of seniors not being sufficiently protected, has led to less professional training being provided to seniors, with approaching retirement as an excuse.

The retirement age is being increased progressively in most countries. However, to work longer measures and adaptations need to be made for senior workers within the limits of the market needs. In reality the EU member states impose mandatory retirement ages in different professional sectors. The consequence is employers pushing many senior and experienced - and hence higher paid - employees into retirement whilst preferring younger lower paid persons for the same job functions. This despite the existence of specific programs to help jobseekers, such as lowered social charges for employers, targeted training and outplacement programmes, etc.

The EU labour Directives demand that employers make reasonable adjustments to integrate disabled persons. Unfortunately, this does not apply to older workers that have simple physical limitations due to physical wear.

It is often overlooked that work, in addition to being a source of income, also constitutes an occasion to actively contribute to society. In addition to the economic dimension, work also has a social dimension, ameliorating social inclusion and generating a relationship of solidarity between generations.

Time has come for new types of communication, new forms of solidarity to combat discrimination and isolation. In the recent sanitary crisis the dangers of a non participative and inclusive society have been clearly visible. FIAPA would like to alert you to the risks of a breakdown in the relationship between generations. Faced with issues similar to those in war and natural

catastrophes, ageism - already the most widespread -ism - is spreading like a wildfire. Today, through the phenomenon of internalisations, even the older persons contribute to this scourge.

Both in Europe and in the rest of the world, older persons cannot always count on regional and national systems to protect their rights. This is why FIAPA is mobilised for the Convention of the rights of the older person. All of us - wherever we live - have the same rights when we age. Such a convention would also spur change and make governments accountable.

