



## SLOVENIA

### Identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how best to address them

#### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Reply by Slovenia

##### Identification of gaps

- 1. For each of the topics that have been considered by the Open-ended Working Group since its eighth session, please state possible gaps your Government/organization has identified in the normative framework and practical implementation for the protection of the human rights of older persons.**

##### **a) Equality and non-discrimination**

Demographic changes and modern lifestyles bring about less and less intergenerational contact and cooperation within the family. In such an environment, prejudices and stereotypes about older people thrive and are often accompanied by discrimination. Modern media, especially social platforms, can further contribute to this alienation in society, further aggravated by the public's ignorance of these issues. Without understanding discrimination in the wider context of ageism, it is impossible to combat it effectively.

In order to successfully tackle discrimination and inequality, we believe that this issue needs to be included in a broader national document, which can either stand alone on the subject of discrimination – or ageism in a wider sense – or be part of a national strategy dealing with a long-lived society.

Legislation, both at national and local level, has a key role to play in tackling discrimination. Legislation and other acts should be systematically reviewed and upgraded in instances where age-based discrimination against older people may occur (e.g. possible restrictions on taking out loans on grounds of age and individual additional checks for renewing driving licences for older people).

Discrimination can also be the result of unequal opportunities, social exclusion, personal dependence due to helplessness, illness, infirmity, material dependence or even poverty and the reduced social influence of older adults.

It would certainly be appropriate to set up a special working group at national level, made up of representatives of the relevant ministries and government offices, the Ombudsman and NGOs representing older persons, to follow up this issue and to monitor progress.

However, we believe that, in addition to legislation, the following steps would also be appropriate and would contribute to greater equality and non-discrimination of older people:

- Systematic awareness-raising among the population as a whole about ageing and longevity. People need credible information about ageing beyond the stereotypical perception of old age as the period of decline, illness and forgetfulness. Part of this is challenging the belief that active old age is but a continuation of middle-aged life, if at a slightly slower pace. As people age, they experience changes, but also personal growth.
- The inclusion of ageing and longevity in school curricula, where the subject of ageing would be approached from a positive point of view in terms of longevity on the one hand, and ageism categorised as one of many “-isms” on the other.
- Systematic promotion of intergenerational activities and intergenerational cooperation as successful ways of overcoming ageism.
- Organised and systematic data collection and analysis on discrimination and ageism.

#### **b) Violence, neglect and abuse**

Older people frequently experience economic hardships due to low income and/or are victims of economic exploitation by their families. Older people are often victims of violence, neglect or abuse, which are not always detected because they may occur in the family environment. Another problem is that older people, victims of domestic violence, often choose not to report their relatives. Furthermore, care workers are not adequately trained to detect violence against older persons (e.g. carers or nurses caring for older persons in their homes, etc.).

The police perceive violence, neglect and abuse of older persons mainly through the exercise of their powers, i.e. when dealing with the most serious forms of violence against older persons and when older persons fall victim of crime or minor offences. Regardless of who is the perpetrator of violence against older persons – family members or complete strangers – the fact is that older people are a vulnerable group of victims. Under Article 13 of the Police Tasks and Powers Act (Principle of respect of human personality and dignity and other human rights and fundamental freedoms), police officers are particularly considerate and helpful in treating victims and persons who need additional attention, including older persons.

The task of the police is not only to detect crimes, but also to prevent criminal acts by sending a clear message that violence is unacceptable, that victims will be protected and that all measures

provided for by law will be implemented. Victims must also be encouraged and supported during the police procedures and later on in proceedings before the judicial authorities.

The police pay particular attention to the detection of violence and to the training of police officers in the field of violence against vulnerable groups. Regular training is provided for specific groups (e.g. 113 operators, police station assistants, juvenile delinquency officers, etc.), and a number of bachelor's and master's theses are produced on the treatment of vulnerable groups.

The problem of under-reporting instances of abuse could be resolved through gaining public trust, engaging properly with the victim and ensuring appropriate security responses. Cooperation between the services dealing with these issues and appropriate response from the people responsible for security issues are of paramount importance.

Older persons (victims) are not always able to disclose abuse for a variety of reasons: they have a limited vocabulary; they do not recognise the abuse; they have limited mobility (due to certain circumstances or architectural barriers); they do not know where to go for help; they have a dependent relationship with the perpetrator; they believe that the abuse is their own problem and that others should not know about it; they are too patient and passive in expressing their needs and wishes; they make excuses for the abuse and shift blame; perpetrators may threaten the victim with more violence; victims lack self-confidence and self-esteem. According to the police, victims sometimes report instances of abuse and violence, but later withdraw the report. Neighbours usually keep silent, there is no material evidence, etc.

In 2021, the number of reported crimes decreased, as is typical of all property crimes in Slovenia. The statistics show a decrease in instances of theft and grand larceny, but an increase in instances of fraud involving older victims. The number of other criminal acts remains approximately the same. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight crimes that particularly affect older people because they take place in an environment where they are supposed to feel safe – i.e. domestic violence and violent conduct – and possible consequences of these crimes, which include bodily injury and even death.

Number of crimes by selected articles of the Criminal Code involving victims over 64 years of age in the 2018-2022 period:

Number of criminal offences		Year				
Article	Category of violation	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
129	Abandonment of an infirm person		1	1		2
132	Criminal coercion				1	
135	Threats	127	164	169	180	170
170	Rape	1	1			4
171	Sexual violence	2	1	2	2	
172	Sexual abuse of a vulnerable person	1		1	2	

<b>191</b>	Domestic violence	152	150	184	166	145
<b>204</b>	Theft	1,667	1,383	1,139	991	1,137
<b>205</b>	Grand larceny	1,952	1,785	1,601	984	1,066
<b>206</b>	Robbery	24	26	23	23	12
<b>211</b>	Fraud	185	212	232	261	313
<b>296</b>	Violent conduct	16	18	21	19	20
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,127</b>	<b>3,741</b>	<b>3,373</b>	<b>2,629</b>	<b>2,869</b>

### **c) Long-term care and palliative care**

The key piece of legislation on long-term care is not yet fully in force. As a result, older people still face problems related to long-term care. Older persons living at home have no option to receive physiotherapy or occupational therapy at home, and nursing care, when needed, has to be provided by relatives or by hired professionals. Many older persons are unable to meet this financial burden and are more prone to illness and injury due to poor care conditions. Consequently, they are often forced to move to care institutions, although they would prefer to stay at home.

### **d) Autonomy and independence**

A sense of autonomy and independence is one of the key foundations for ageing with dignity. Older persons may experience various constraints due to external, age-related or illness-related causes, which make them less independent than before and limit their autonomy.

Particular attention should be paid to the restrictions imposed on older persons by the institutions in which they may live. These include unnecessary restrictions on visiting times, early bedtimes, excessive use of sedatives and so on. In institutions, particular attention should be devoted to possible abuses both in terms of physical measures and medication, which might be committed to lighten the workload of the care staff.

Another weakness in this area is older people's lack of awareness of human rights and their inability to identify instances where their right to autonomy and independence is violated. The root cause lies in the lack of awareness of the population in general and older persons in particular, with negative stereotypes about ageing and older persons being a contributing factor. Such stereotypes are widespread in today's society, and sometimes older persons actually start acting accordingly, which further limits their autonomy and independence.

### **e) Education, training, lifelong learning and capacity-building**

Slovenia believes that learning continues throughout life in different learning environments and in different ways, and contributes to the overall development of individuals and the community. Adult education in the Republic of Slovenia offers a wide and varied range of educational programmes and activities tailored to the pace of adult life. Our aim is to provide access to learning opportunities for as many adults as possible, including the 65+ population, and to encourage their participation in educational and support activities.

The public interest principle in adult education is lifelong learning for all. The public interest in adult education is defined in the National Adult Education Programme adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia on the proposal of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, as a rule for a period of ten years. The Resolution on the National Adult Education Programme for 2022-2030 (ReNPIO22-30) provides orientations for adult education policy at the national level and contributes to the systemic regulation in the field, including stable funding, priority areas and substantive tasks for the development of adult education. The vision of ReNPIO22-30 is to provide equal opportunities and incentives for quality learning and education for all at all stages of life.

To achieve this goals, partnerships between all stakeholders in the process need to be established and opportunities for professional cooperation between states and organisation at the European level and beyond promoted. Special focus is on a cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach aimed at strengthening the policies and measures to implement the rights of older persons at all levels. In this context it needs to be noted that the recognition of the right to lifelong learning, including for older people, at the global level could make an important contribution to the quality and regulation of this field through continued development and exchange of good practices.

### **f) Right to Work and Access to the Labour Market**

In Slovenia, social security for working-age older people is guaranteed on the basis of the legal acts governing individual social insurance schemes. Furthermore, unemployed older people as a vulnerable group are given priority under active employment policy measures.

Unemployment insurance, including for older persons, is compulsory in Slovenia and regulated by the Labour Market Regulation Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. 80/10 and subsequent amendments).

The Labour Market Regulation Act also provides for the reactivation of retired persons through temporary or casual work. In this type of work, the gross hourly wage of the beneficiary may not be lower than the minimum wage, and the amount of gross income allowed in a calendar year is limited and adjusted to the minimum wage.

In the framework of active employment policy (AEP), the age limit for the target group of registered unemployed people to be considered older persons is 50 years. This target group, together with other target groups, is described in more detail in the umbrella document for the development of AEP policies in the period 2021-2025 (*Guidelines for the implementation of active employment policy measures for the period 2021-2025*, <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MDDSZ/APZ/Smernice-APZ-2021-2025.docx>). A key challenge in this period is to increase the labour force participation of the older unemployed and other vulnerable groups (long-term unemployed, less educated, young people, people with disabilities, social assistance recipients, etc.). To this end, the older unemployed (and other vulnerable groups) are prioritised in AEP measures with the aim of returning to the labour market and to new jobs as soon as possible.

#### **g) Access to justice**

The Ministry of Justice has not identified any major substantial gaps regarding the access to justice of older persons. There are no special arrangements foreseen concerning their legal capacity and/or legal standing in Slovenian legislation. However, the number of vulnerable adults is increasing continuously due to the growing number of people with disabilities and the ageing of the population. Slovenia actively participates in the negotiations as regards the EU Proposal for a Regulation on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition and enforcement of measures and cooperation in matters relating to the protection of adults and the Proposal for a Council Decision authorising Member States to become or remain parties, in the interest of the European Union, to the Convention of 13 January 2000 on the International Protection of Adults. Adopting common rules and closer cooperation within the EU would ensure continuity of the support for vulnerable adults in cross-border situations for all purposes. It would guarantee their equal access to justice, ensure they can manage their assets or property abroad and ensure their continued medical care.

In Slovenia, many acts address the issues of older persons, namely the Legal Aid Act (e.g. legal aid may be granted *inter alia* in cases where the major part of the personal income of an applicant or any of the applicant's family members is intended for the payment of institutional care services, e. g. payment for care in a home for older persons ); Criminal Procedure Act (police and other state authorities in criminal and pre-trial proceedings must treat the injured parties, suspects, accused persons and convicts with particular care and act with due consideration where necessary because of their vulnerability such as age, health condition, disability, or other similar circumstances. When assessing the special needs of injured parties, the competent authority must examine their personal characteristics, including their age and potential disability); Civil Procedure Act (by recognising the vulnerability of older persons, alternative manner of service is provided to recipients staying in establishments designed for communal housing or for carrying out activities which involve 24-hour residence, such as hospitals and homes for older persons; persons unable to respond to an invitation to the court hearing on grounds of age, illness or serious bodily defects are heard in their place of residence); Court Rules (invitations to the court

hearing must contain a notification stating that participants with disabilities or persons with special needs can notify the court prior to the hearing that they will be enforcing their right to equal participation in the procedure (special IT tools provided if they have hearing impairment, room accessible with the elevator or in the ground floor, etc.)); Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions Act (convicted persons whose age, illness or disability necessitates additional assistance with the meeting of basic needs in the form of nursing or social care may reside in a modified area or department of one of the prisons).

#### **h) Contribution of Older Persons to Sustainable Development**

1. Cooperation between the managing authority and human rights mechanisms is crucial to ensure the effective protection of human rights at national level and compliance with the human rights legal framework at international level. In the context of European cohesion policy, the EU has an important role to play in ensuring equal opportunities for and improving the quality of life of all EU citizens through the implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Charter) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Convention). The Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development (MCRD) plays an umbrella role in the implementation of cohesion policy in Slovenia. The Charter and the Convention are among the preconditions for the implementation of European cohesion policy in the programming period 2021-2027, which means that under their provisions, every member state must ensure the implementation. The activities of the EU institutions must be geared towards the promotion and implementation of the Charter and the Convention. The aim is to ensure that any new initiative is in line with the Charter and the Convention and that, where rights are affected, justification is given as to why the measure is necessary and proportionate and solutions are put in place to mitigate any negative impact of the measure on people's rights. In keeping with Council Decision 2010/48/EC, the manner of the implementation of the two documents and its monitoring is defined in the Rules for the implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities drafted by the MCRD.

In the implementation of cohesion projects, the MCRD adheres not only to the Charter and the Convention, but also to all human rights conventions and treaties signed and ratified by Slovenia. The MCRD implements training programmes and campaigns aimed at raising the awareness of human rights in the framework of cohesion policy, and cooperates with various stakeholders in the field of human rights.

2. The new financial perspective 2021-2027 is still in the early phases and the first projects have just been approved, so it is not yet possible to assess how the implementation of the Charter and the Convention will affect the strengthening of the protection of human rights.

3. As the managing authority of the human rights mechanisms, the MCRD does not have a direct role specifically related to older persons.

Measures related to improving the quality of life and well-being of older people are included in project implementation. Some projects indirectly or directly contribute to better living conditions of older people, for example:

- Investment projects: renovation or construction of homes for older persons; renovation of health centres and hospitals, etc.
- Projects linked to social programmes: projects enabling lifelong learning, learning for older persons, intergenerational projects, etc.
- Projects improving access to services: public transport, infrastructure, digital technologies, etc.
- Projects promoting the employment of older persons: incentives for employers to hire older persons, retraining, etc.
- Support for programmes to raise awareness and prevent discrimination and violence against older persons, promote active ageing, etc.

In implementing such programmes, the MCRD and other line ministries work in partnership with local authorities, NGOs, health institutions and other stakeholders responsible for the provision of services to older persons.

4. Through cohesion policy, the EU and Slovenia address equal opportunities and human rights. By promoting and approving projects that make a significant contribution to improving the situation of older persons in various areas, the MCRD has greatly contributed to the realisation of the human rights of older persons.

#### **i) Right to health and access to health services**

When it comes to access to health services, older people often face mobility problems in addition to a shortage of doctors and longer waiting times, so special attention should be devoted to this issue, including transport by car. In parts of Slovenia, organised car transport has been introduced, but the needs are substantially greater than the possibilities.

With regard to access to health services, Slovenia has long faced long waiting times, which hinder the prompt treatment of all patients. As the need for health services is greater among older population, this disproportionately affects older people. In addition, older persons are less skilled in finding the necessary health services on the market and are often prevented from doing so by their socio-economic status. Over the last five years, Slovenia has launched several initiatives to reduce waiting times, including financial incentives for providers, improvements in the reporting system and lifting restrictions on the scope of selected paid-for health services. Last year, around EUR 100 million was invested in purchasing additional capacity to reduce waiting times. Despite all these efforts, long waiting times remain an ongoing challenge in Slovenia.

Financing of health services. In Slovenia, the basic basket of health services includes services on the primary, the secondary and the tertiary levels.



## **j) Social Inclusion**

People are social beings and need interpersonal contacts and socialising. In old age, the need for solitude usually increases, but the desire for contact with others remains. The concept of social inclusion is based on the notion that every member of society must have the possibility to be included in society if they wish to be included. All the people who make up a society form its cohesion. Older persons should not be hindered in their integration into society by reasons such as race, gender, religious beliefs or age. Excluding one segment of the population would significantly reduce the cohesion of society.

For older persons, social inclusion plays a very important role at the local level, where they live and interact with others. The key issue regarding the social inclusion of older persons is whether their integration decreases with or because of their age, despite their wishes to the contrary. Older persons often feel that after retirement they are no longer perceived as equal members of society, despite the contribution they have made to that same society during their active lives.

It is precisely the negative perceptions of older persons and of old age (forgetfulness, illness, infirmity) that are deeply imprinted on the minds of younger and middle-aged people and still govern their thinking as they age. These beliefs have a considerable impact on the way society perceives older persons and the way older persons perceive themselves. There is a clear danger of undermining social cohesion when older persons behave in a way that the environment expects them to behave. Action at national and local level would be welcome to move beyond such negative stereotypes about older persons and old age, where NGOs representing both older persons and younger generations could play an important role.

National authorities, in cooperation with the local environment and NGOs, also have a major responsibility in creating an all-age-friendly society. At local level in particular, there should be a constant check on areas where older people are likely to become excluded against their will.

Older people often experience loneliness. Findings of the National Institute of Public Health survey "SI-PANDA: How the COVID-19 pandemic in Slovenia affected the lives of people aged 65-74" showed that 66.1% of respondents reported that the pandemic had negatively affected their social contacts with extended family and friends.

Older adults need more health care, often face social exclusion and are at high risk of poverty. Socially excluded older adults are more likely to be marginalised.

As many older persons have mobility problems, companion care provided by volunteers or other stakeholders should be promoted alongside social inclusion. In Slovenia, good results have been achieved by the programme implemented by the Slovenian Federation of Pensioners' Organisations involving home visits, which could be considered as a form of peer-to-peer support.

### **k) Accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access)<sup>1</sup>**

At the end of 2022, older population (65+) in Slovenia represented around 21% of the total population. Access to transport as well as to infrastructure for all vulnerable groups is a challenge, especially in public passenger transport, intercity connections and in rural or sparsely populated areas. To solve this problem, Slovenia has made important steps in the right direction in recent years.

In 2021 and 2022, 52 new passenger trains were put into service. All trains are low-floor and adapted for people with reduced mobility (older persons, persons with disabilities, etc.). Many local authorities have introduced “Prostofer” free-of-charge car transfers for older people. To ensure accessibility to services for retired people over 65 years of age, free intercity regular passenger transport by road and rail was introduced at national level in 2019. Subsequently, several municipalities also introduced free transport for these users on their own initiative within the urban transport network in their area.

Since 2017, a project to enable multi-modal mobility for people with various disabilities has been under way, with data on external (including transport) and web environment being compiled and updated. This provides vulnerable groups with information on the accessibility of the external environment.

Measures to address transport poverty are being developed for sparsely populated areas where public transport is poor or non-existent. Transport poverty refers to a lack of adequate transport services necessary to access general services and work, or to the inability to pay for these transport services.

Measures in this area will largely be co-financed by the Social Climate Fund, for which Slovenia has to submit a spending plan by 2025. As older persons are one of the target groups for these measures, we believe that this scheme will enable them equal access to basic services and to lead a more dignified life.

### **l) Participation in the public life and in decision-making processes<sup>2</sup>**

Political and civic participation is the mechanism through which citizens engage in the formulation of political and civic initiatives to voice their interests, aspirations and needs. The number and proportion of older people is increasing, and older people themselves are changing. Today, they are healthier, more physically active, better educated and more aware of their rights than before. They want to be more active in both civic and political spheres.

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<sup>1</sup> To be discussed at the 14<sup>th</sup> Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing

<sup>2</sup> To be discussed at the 14<sup>th</sup> Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing

The State must provide the right conditions for older persons to engage in dialogue with other population groups at the political and civic levels (e.g. access to information, participation in legislative processes through comments or autonomous proposals). Another important element that can hinder participation in decision-making processes is the restriction of certain activities after reaching a certain age. This is one of the issues that should be systematically reviewed in legislation to eliminate discrimination against older people. Another notable limitation is modern information and communication technologies, which people over 80 often have problems using. So far, intergenerational learning how to use modern information technologies and info points in the local environment available to older persons (e.g. local offices) have proved to be a good solution.

One of the central institutions designed to foster the participation of the older population in public life and decision-making processes in the Longevity Council tasked with watching over and coordinating the implementation of key national strategies on longevity. It is a key platform where representatives of older people can influence the implementation of policies that affect older people.

The key slogan guiding participation in public life and decision-making processes is “Nothing about us without us”. This approach recognises that whoever is affected by a measure or a decision has the right to express their opinion before the measure is taken, and means a step up from the former perception that older persons require care first and foremost, be it social assistance or institutional care. The new approach that envisions increased involvement of older people in decision-making processes will give older persons the opportunity to meaningfully participate in taking decisions that affect them. After all, we are talking about the generation which – together with those that came before it – has created today’s society.

It must also be taken into consideration that older persons are a very heterogeneous group, but in their later years they are more vulnerable in terms of their opportunities of participation in social life. The involvement of older persons in public life should not be limited only to initial decision-making processes, but should also be actively pursued in subsequent monitoring and evaluation phases.

#### **Options on how best to address the gaps**

- 1. Please state how your Government/organization has engaged with international and regional human rights mechanisms (for example: universal periodic review (UPR) treaty bodies, special procedures, regional mechanisms), specifically with regard to older persons.**

Due to the ageing society and demographic changes, Slovenia has for more than a decade endeavoured to put more emphasis on the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons at the global level. Slovenia regularly participates in the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), which provides an opportunity for questions and

recommendations to states on the measures to combat ageism and age-based discrimination and to protect the human rights of older persons.

With regard to the special procedures of the HRC, Slovenia regularly participates in the interactive dialogues with the Independent expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, both within the framework of the HRC and of the 3rd Committee of the UN General Assembly. In November 2014, Slovenia was the first country visited by the Independent Expert. In April 2016, Slovenia hosted an international conference “Ageing: Rights for Empowerment”.

Slovenia has also actively contributed to the debate on the human rights of older persons in the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA) in New York. Between 2013 and 2022, Slovenia was a member of the OEWGA Bureau. At the 13th session of the OEWGA, Slovenia participated in the core group for the adoption of the decision on the “Identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how best to address them”.

In Geneva, Slovenia focuses on addressing the substantive elements of the human rights of older persons that need special attention. Slovenia co-chairs the Group of Friends of the Rights of Older Persons in Geneva and is a member of the Group of Friends of Older Persons in New York. Slovenia was taking part in the core group that tabled several resolutions on human rights of older persons in the HRC.

In November 2021, the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU organised an international video conference “Human Rights for all ages: Promoting a life course perspective and intergenerational cooperation to combat ageism” aimed at highlighting the harmful effects of ageism and finding ways to tackle it successfully.

Slovenia is also a regular participant in the UNECE Standing Working Group on Ageing, which is based on the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy. Between 2016 and 2022, Slovenia was a member of the Bureau of the Standing Working Group on Ageing. It is also involved in a Task Group to examine the possibility of upgrading the Madrid Plan of Action and its Implementation.

In its reporting to treaty bodies, Slovenia regularly highlights the importance of ensuring the human rights of older persons, which is reflected in progress at national level. We welcome the approach of some treaty bodies who have made efforts to address the issues affecting older persons in their work place, including through general comments.

In the area of education and learning, Slovenia – as part of the UN, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the EU and the OECD – has regularly engaged in inter-governmental cooperation processes and human rights mechanisms for reporting on issues related to the country’s commitments on the right to education and training. Moreover, Slovenia has actively participated in the development and adoption of diverse documents and instruments related

to the exercise of human rights and the right to lifelong learning in regional and wider international frameworks.

Slovenia is committed to the UN goals and principals embedded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Charter of Human Rights of the European Union, Title III, Article 25, “recognizes and respects the rights of the elderly to lead a life of dignity and independence and to participate in social and cultural life”. There are some common policy-oriented documents with recommendations intended for older persons in these policy areas; most of these papers, however, are focused on active population aged up to 65.

The main global document that explicitly addresses the area of lifelong learning and that Slovenia takes as reference in this process: UN Agenda 2030 (2016). The EU level: European Skills Agenda; European Education Area (EEA) 2025; Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027); Upskilling Pathways; Council Resolution on a New European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030 (2021/C 504/02); Green Paper on Ageing (fostering solidarity and responsibility between generations); The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (2021).

**2. Have those engagement resulted in positive impact in strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons? Please elaborate.**

Among other things, Slovenia’s engagement at international level contributed to the establishment of the mandate of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons in 2013. The Independent Expert first visited Slovenia in 2014.

With the resolution 48/3 on the human rights of older persons, the HRC requested the OHCHR to convene a multi-stakeholder meeting on the human rights of older persons to discuss the High Commissioner's report on normative standards and obligations under international law relating to the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons. Subsequently, a report that contained a summary of the multi-stakeholder meeting was submitted to the 51<sup>st</sup> Session of the HRC.

Efforts at international level have also had a positive impact on translation into the national context, e.g. in the field of palliative care, mental health, dementia, etc.

– Long-term care and Palliative care: Following the model of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Slovenia has developed a National Programme for Palliative Care. This programme enables the development of palliative support at all levels of the health system and introduces a new organisational form – a mobile palliative unit. In addition, Slovenia is implementing a palliative care programme in homes for older persons based on the PACE model.

– Right to Health and Access to Health Services: In 2018, Slovenia adopted the Resolution on the National Mental Health Programme 2018-2028, which introduces a reform in the field of mental health by shifting the focus of mental disorders from the secondary health care level to the primary health care level in the local environment.

- The Ombudsman, in the capacity as the National Preventive Mechanism, carries out regular unannounced monitoring visits to wards under special supervision of psychiatric hospitals and to secure wards of social welfare institutions to verify compliance with the standards under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia - International Treaties, No. 7/93).
- In 2023, the Government of Slovenia adopted the Dementia Management Strategy in Slovenia until 2030, a fundamental document for coordinated and integrated action planning and cooperation between stakeholders in the dementia care chain.

In the education sector, international collaboration and engagement in the drafting of different strategic documents and studies, in particular on the EU level, provides important background support in the preparation of national orientations and documents serving as the basis for the education of older persons.

Slovenia has designed a series of strategic documents providing a framework for inclusive and sustainable human-centred policies, all of them taking into account regional and international processes and goals:

1. Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 (2017)
2. Active Aging Strategy (adopted by the Slovenian Government, 2017)
3. Resolution on the Adult Education Master Plan for the Period 2022-2030 (ReAEMP22-30, adopted by the National Assembly, 2022)

With a view of ensuring equal opportunities for the adult population of Slovenia and incentives for quality learning and education at all stages of life to ensure their continuous development and sustainable living.

Target groups:

- Adults with low levels of basic skills, regardless of employment status, age or other characteristics.
- Adults who need to improve their general educational attainment to meet personal needs and community challenges.
- Adults in need of further vocational or professional education or training in line with labour market needs.
- Young adults, early school leavers and school dropouts.
- Older persons (65+) and adults with limited access to social, cultural, economic and educational goods.

4. National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy 2019-2030
5. Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Slovenia: Improving the Governance of Adult Learning
6. National programme for the prevention of chronic diseases
7. National programme on mental health
8. Community nursing in Slovenia

Older persons (65+) are trained to prevent falls at home. Activities include the prevention of frailty through healthy nutrition and diet, physical activity and mental health support.

**3. What other options can be considered to strengthen the protection of older persons?  
Please elaborate.**

As life expectancy rises and populations are ageing, the rights and well-being of older persons are becoming a matter of concern and in greater focus at national as well as international levels. The UN acknowledged this fact by creating the OEWGA and establishing an Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons. Slovenia strongly supports the work and the mandate of the OEWGA and of the Independent Expert, and within the UN and elsewhere advocates for policies that perceive older persons as human rights holders and not only as welfare recipients.

Rapid demographic changes will double the percentage of older persons by 2050, so we believe this issue should no longer be neglected. In our view, the current global human rights framework is insufficient and fragmented, and does not adequately address the needs of older persons. Gaps and limitations in the existing international legal human rights framework must urgently be addressed at the global level.

We welcome the regional instruments specifically devoted to human rights of older persons, including the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons. These instruments are an important contribution to the protection of human rights of older persons at the regional level, but cannot replace protection at the global level. We also see the important role of other human rights mechanisms, such as the HRC special procedures and practices of treaty bodies, which do not impose legally binding obligations, but nevertheless play an important role in advocacy for the human rights of older persons.

Despite acknowledging the positive role of the existing mechanisms, it is also important to recognise and accept their limitations. In our view, these mechanisms do not address the specific challenges of older persons stemming from the normative gaps in the international legal framework, i.e. age-based discrimination, neglect and abuse of older persons, limitations in the participation of older persons and older persons' right to healthcare, long-term care and palliative services.

Slovenia believes that gaps in the legal protection of older persons would be best addressed through a comprehensive international legally binding instrument for the promotion and protection of the rights and dignity of older persons. An international treaty developed in an intergovernmental setting within the UN with the broad participation of all stakeholders and devoted specifically to older persons would not only guarantee the promotion and protection of their rights and dignity, but would also increase the visibility of this often overlooked social group.

The protection of the rights of older persons will only be guaranteed if specific aspects of their rights are mainstreamed in the activities of the UN. Slovenia is advocating such an approach in

its engagement in the HRC and in the General Assembly, including through various resolutions and the UPR.

**4. *If applicable*, what is your assessment on the protection of the human rights of older persons according to regional and international instruments?**

In addition to our response under question 3, we would like to welcome the work of the international human rights mechanisms, in particular the relevant treaty bodies that include issues affecting older persons. Given the fragmentation of the existing norms, we believe that a number of issues relevant for older persons are not adequately covered by the existing human rights framework in law and in practice. We see the need to develop a legally binding instrument that both takes into account current demographic trends and provides guidance on how to deal with demographic change due to rapid population ageing.