



Our vision on human rights in 7 principles

Older people take a stand on their human rights!

This ‘manifesto’ was drafted and adopted by AGE Platform Europe members, which are organisations of and for older people, directly representing more than 40 million people 50+ across the European Union. Using genuine bottom-up participatory methodology, this is **the first consensual position that was built with the direct involvement of more than 100 representative organisations of older people**. It reflects older people’s understanding and expectations about the protection of their human rights in seven essential principles that everyone aiming to promote older people’s rights should take into account.

1. Older women and men have the same rights as everyone else

Older people do not claim specific or new rights. Although in principle human rights instruments apply equally across our lifetime, in reality people encounter systematic and structural inequalities when they get older. The particular challenges that arise in old age, and the lack of visibility of these challenges in human rights instruments, create barriers to the equal and full enjoyment of human rights by people when they get older. These barriers have not yet been adequately addressed by the existing international human rights framework.

2. Older people should have equal opportunities

Older people are often excluded, have fewer choices and are offered services of poor quality on account of their old age; they frequently lack equal access to training, employment and health care; and they are regularly deprioritised or even overlooked in policy reforms. Treating people differently just because they are old is a form of discrimination which remains unchallenged because ageism is pervasive and entrenched in our society. Older people’s rights are about ensuring that the rights everyone has do not diminish nor become less important with age and that everyone – regardless of age – has equal opportunities to participate, contribute to and benefit from their societies.

3. Respecting older people’s rights benefits society as a whole

The contributions of older people to society are often devalued and old age can be seen as synonymous with decline, burden and uselessness. Many older people contribute vastly to the social, political, economic and cultural life of their countries, notably as workers, caregivers, volunteers, grandparents, consumers and political actors. Recognising older people as rights holders means respecting them as full members of society, regardless of their age or any other consideration, such as health status. A human rights approach enables older people to be full actors in society and to offer their knowledge, skills and experience through civic participation and public engagement to help shape a better world for all.



4. States need to take action to ensure equal rights across the lifecourse

Even though human rights are conceived as universal, it does not mean that these rights are protected equally across all ages in practice. In addition to the equal application of laws and policies addressing the general population, measures specifically targeting older people may be needed so that older people can enjoy their rights in an equal manner. Such measures should not generate a privileged system of protection for older people. Their objective should be to compensate for and address the accumulated effects of ageism, marginalisation and a lack of equal recognition for older people -in particular those facing multiple discrimination - which prevent them from enjoying their dignity and rights like everyone else,.

5. Older people should be at the centre of processes that affect their lives

Older people should be heard as equal citizens by decision makers and service providers across all areas of their life, even when they find themselves in vulnerable situations. Only by involving older persons in the conception of laws, policies and strategies, as well as in their implementation and the assessment of their outcomes, can we develop truly inclusive societies in which decisions are grounded on the lived experiences of all citizens. Older people should not be left behind in the discussions about their rights, but should instead guide the process, like all other citizens. Their lifetime knowledge, skills and experience are an added value for society and should be taken into account.

6. A UN convention will help older people contribute, prosper and equally enjoy their rights

A UN convention will be an important acknowledgement that older citizens are of equal value to society. It will draw public attention to the specific structural and cultural barriers that prevent older persons from enjoying their rights. It will prescribe the changes that are necessary for States to fulfil their obligations under the existing universal human rights instruments and encourage the establishment of mechanisms that older people can use to claim their rights. Moreover, it will improve older persons' awareness of their rights, empower them as rights holders, and help fight internalised ageist stereotypes that sometimes impede them from reporting rights violations.

7. Binding human rights commitments need to be applied through regional, national and local action

A UN convention - alongside the implementation of existing international law – will provide much needed guidance to States and civil society on how older persons' rights should be protected. Regional, national and local policies and legislation are necessary to put these commitments into practice and to make a measurable impact on the lives of older people at grassroots level. A UN Convention should therefore be complemented by specific benchmarks and stronger monitoring processes with regard to the human rights situation of older people around the world.