



THE EU MUST LEAD THE RALLYING FOR A UN CONVENTION !

The EU and its member states are global leaders in the defence and promotion of human rights. They paved the way in outlawing age discrimination and protecting the rights of older people in national and regional instruments. But progress is in practice slow, limited and inconsistent. Older people cannot always rely on regional or national system to protect their rights.

The call for a UN convention is not new, but is even more urgent now, as – amidst a global pandemic - all EU member states have expressed deep concern over the escalation of ageism and have agreed to work using a rights-based approach to foster more inclusive, equitable, resilient and age-friendly societies.

We need an international instrument so that all of us- no matter where we live- are entitled to the same rights when we grow older.

A new UN convention has a transformative potential that can guide future action to support the realisation of universal rights in old age.

To date no international human rights treaty has been adopted without the support of European states. The ongoing debate about the feasibility of a new UN convention allows the EU to demonstrate in practice its leadership to ensuring equal respect of everyone's rights at all ages.



WHAT IS THE VALUE OF A NEW UN CONVENTION?

BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE

Reframing & Accountability

The ongoing pandemic has demonstrated that – despite some progress – older people are still problematized as vulnerable and in need of protection. Human rights violations against older people are not always treated with the same level of scrutiny, gravity or urgency as violations against women, children or persons with disabilities. A new UN convention would create an obligation to detect and address human rights violations against older persons. It could also ensure that ageing policies are unambiguously anchored on human rights.

Impetus for reform

Existing human rights treaties offer little clarity regarding how to proactively support the equal realisation of human rights in old age. A convention would provide a richer, clearer and more accessible interpretation of universal rights. It could spell out concrete changes that are necessary to address specific rights violations experienced in old age. For example, a convention would:

- outlaw age discrimination in all spheres of life
- address the digital gap
- include a far-reaching right to care and support.

BETTER ENTRY POINT FOR PARTICIPATION & REMEDY

Empowering rights holders and advocates

A UN convention can empower older persons to exercise and claim their rights. It would enhance opportunities for individuals and civil society to hold governments to account and access remedy. Therefore, it could strengthen the general enforceability of the human rights system.

Imposing a duty of participation

Older people are not consistently involved in decision-making processes that affect their human rights. A UN convention would create more space for individuals and organizations that advocate for equal rights in old age to be involved in public affairs and demand their rights.

MAINSTREAMING OLDER PEOPLE'S RIGHTS IN THE UN SYSTEM

Visibility

Several UN reports have provided ample evidence of the relative invisibility of older persons within the existing human rights system. A new convention would rectify the systemic neglect of older people in the current human rights guarantees and ensure a sustained focus.

Interoperability

A new UN convention would resolve the extant dispersed and inconsistent engagement with older people's issues. It would promote a systematic mainstreaming of human rights in older age. It could also help better address multiple disadvantages that occur at the intersections of different forms of inequalities.

