

HelpAge Europe Regional Network Joint Statement

A UN Convention for the Rights of Older People

*Solid ground for a
fairer society*

Older people's health and lives have been at particular risk from COVID-19.

Their rights have been denied and disproportionately affected in public health responses to the pandemic across Europe.

Governments have not always treated older people fairly or equally with others.

Some have introduced specific restrictions for older people.

For others, the pandemic has exposed the inadequacy of many domestic public and private health and social support systems and services, particularly policies and responses related to older people living in care homes.

Responses to COVID-19 have revealed the inequality of access to services for older people and the discrimination they can experience.

We are all likely to face discrimination when we are older.

Yet older people's rights are invisible in the law.

And, right now, decision makers have nowhere to turn to when they need guidance and support to ensure older people's rights are respected.

It doesn't have to be this way.

Our main priority should be meeting everyone's needs and preventing further harm.

As we rebuild our societies we can choose to do so from a place of equality and dignity.

"This pandemic shows that the system we have no longer works. We have to reinvent it, perhaps as something much more personalised." 68-year-old Spanish man living with his spouse in an urban area.

The HelpAge Europe Network is calling for a UN convention for the rights of older people.

A UN convention on the rights of older people would provide the specific answers that governments and others need to make the right decisions and build a society and systems that respects older people and upholds their rights.

146 UN Member States have committed to promoting and respecting the rights of older people in their endorsement of the UN Secretary General's Policy brief.

EU Council Conclusions on the rights of older persons show EU Member States' commitment to the rights of older people.

European states must take the lead and call for the UN to start drafting a convention **now**.

The difference a convention would make

A UN convention on the rights of older people would:

- **Explicit prohibition of age discrimination** in a convention would mean that age discrimination would be treated as seriously as other forms of discrimination in national legislation and responses to future pandemics cannot discriminate on the basis of age.
- **Prevent age discrimination before it happens** by having a positive equality duty in a convention to assess the impact of laws, policies and decisions on older persons before they are introduced.
- **Address systematic ageism and change ageist attitudes and behaviour** by having positive duties in a convention to raise awareness of and eliminate ageist stereotypes and prejudices.

What a convention would do

A UN convention on the rights of older people would:

- **Be a solid base for a fairer society.** It would help ensure that all older people everywhere are treated in a fairer and more just way.
- **Result in better services for all.** It would help ensure that governments, the private sector and others design and deliver services that respect older people's rights.
- **Be a clear guide.** It would be the go-to place to get guidance on what older people's rights are and how to respect them.
- **Be a driver for change.** It would set in motion a chain of events that would improve older people's lives.



HelpAge International is a global network of organisations promoting the right of all older people to lead dignified, healthy and secure lives.

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