

ROUNDTABLE SERIES


MAINSTREAMING KNOWLEDGE ON AGEING

TAKEAWAYS



ACCESS TO LABOR MARKETS FOR OLDER PERSONS: Challenges and opportunities throughout the ageing process

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With the support of:

This document has been prepared by the Division for People and Social Inclusion at UNITAR, Ms. Analucía Jácome, Senior Project Leader and Human Rights Expert, Mr. Rafael Padilla, SDP team, and Mr. Israel Ledesma, Graphic Designer. We hope you enjoy it!

MODERATOR



Mr. Alex Mejia

Director, Division for People and Social Inclusion
UNITAR

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Mme. Claudia Mahler

UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment
of all human rights by older persons

“If we manage to reduce ageism and also support the interrelatedness between younger and older workers in the labour market, this would be a success for all of us.”

1. Humanity is reaching a decade where there will be more older persons than children under five for the first time. In this regard, efforts on access to labour markets through the ageing process should be done; there are fewer younger persons, lesser younger workers, than older workers. Therefore, there is a need to enable all to have access to labour markets as well as the same opportunities to work.
2. Older persons are entitled to the right to work, including access to labour markets, but they face structural barriers because of ageism. The current Human Rights framework does not tackle this issue in the right way. A prohibition on age discrimination is still pending; even though the labour laws are the ones who are most elaborated on age discrimination, ageism with negative stereotypes in different shapes are present in the labour markets, and related policies, actions, and laws.
3. A lifecycle approach shall be considered; otherwise, not all older persons have the same chances as others, and they don't have the plans to fully enjoy their human rights.

HIGHLIGHTS ON THE MANDATE OF THE UN INDEPENDENT EXPERT ON THE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS BY OLDER PERSONS

Mme. Claudia Mahler assumed her role of Independent Expert (IE) in May 2020. Since the establishment of the mandate by the HRC in 2013, the mandate holder assess the implementation of national, regional, and international standards relevant to the rights of older persons; she/he also identifies, exchanges, and promotes best practices relating to the promotion and protection of these rights, including through official country visits. Furthermore, the IE prepares and presents several thematic reports and recommendations to the Human Rights Council and to the General Assembly. interest in approaching other UN entities, as well as States, academia, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector for organizing this Virtual Roundtable Series.



SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS, INDEPENDENT EXPERTS & WORKING GROUPS



4. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights has recognized the right to access to labour markets, together with a non-discrimination clause. Although some International Conventions guarantee the right to work for individuals, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, age is not considered.
5. There is a clear need of a Human Rights Convention which tackles this issue from a broad perspective, including an intersectional approach and challenges for protecting older persons in their full diversity, considering gender, disabilities, migrant and indigenous background as well as all the difficulties they are facing due to stereotypes embedded in societies.



TO BEAR IN MIND

Governments need to prepare themselves to get active and include older persons in their labour markets, through specific measures to bring them back, or bring them into the market. The knowledge, wisdom and productivity of this group shall be taken into account.

Find the IE's latest thematic reports here:

[Documents Listing | OHCHR](#)



Focus: Inclusive responsive employment and labour market policies



Mme. Dorothea Schmidt-Klau

Chief of the Employment, Labour Markets and Youth Branch of the Department of Employment Policy, Job Creation and Livelihoods, EMPLAB, at the UN International Labour Organization

“People need life-course approaches, whether for personal or professional development.”

1. Longevity has doubled since 1900, which is the fastest change ever. The old age population will grow by over 300% over the course of this century, alone by comparison to the working age population that will only grow by 50%. Developing countries will age most rapidly. Less developed countries will see their older population rise by nearly 350%, compared to 70% in developed countries. Population ageing is happening more quickly than ever.
2. The change in old age dependency ratios, or in dependency ratios in general has an important impact. With very few temporary exceptions, old age dependency ratios are changing dramatically in all regions. They are changing most dramatically in northern, southern, and western Europe which is the top line.
3. The demand for long term care is going to increase tremendously because people live longer. Luckily, they live healthier; however, there are challenges due to this long-time effect. The transition to retirement has become more difficult. For example, some European countries have more people in transition from work into poverty, in particular women.
4. Lifelong learning is essential. We need to strengthen social protection and income security, including pension credits for care workers, otherwise we are going to lose women. They will just retire into poverty. We need policies to support new working patterns and active ageing, which is all about occupational safety and health, etc.
5. The elaboration of good policies in this regard need to keep in mind that there are other mega drivers. We need to see how ageing societies or demographic shifts are linked to digitalization, decarbonization, and globalization.

HIGHLIGHTS ON THE WORK OF THE EMPLOYMENT, LABOUR MARKETS AND YOUTH BRANCH, EMPLAB, AND LABOUR MARKETS SERVICES FOR TRANSITIONS

The work of the EMPLAB branch is guided by international normative and policy instruments (notably the Employment Policy Convention No. 122) relevant to the promotion of employment and decent jobs for all.

The branch responds to the demands and needs of ILO constituents, and other relevant development stakeholders. Its services consider the specific circumstances of countries in terms of the economic and labour market situation, and sectoral composition, along with the challenges faced by different population groups (youth, working age, older workers) and different types of workers (formal, informal), including the most vulnerable ones.

EMPLAB seeks to influence policy change through social dialogue and participatory practices. Its Geneva-based staff teams up with ILO employment specialists in the different regions to offer coordinated responses to contextual, contemporary challenges.

EMPLAB supports governments, and workers' and employers' organisations to develop and implement gender-responsive employment and labour market policies with a focus on youth, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



International
Labour
Organization





DID YOU KNOW?

90% of long-time care workers are women in the majority of G-20 countries, this is an occurrence of huge significance for women and their access to employment. There is a gender component, and we have to be very careful because women have more difficulties throughout their work life, but these difficulties do not stop when they become older, they actually increase. We need to make sure that women and men have equal opportunities. We need to have targeted policies and accept that work live careers are not as before - it's not from school to job to retirement-; there are many versions of that path and this needs to be taken into account.

CURIOUS FACT

When pensions were introduced in Germany in 1889, life expectancy was 40 years, meaning that almost nobody reached pension age. Now the average age is 80 or even above, which means that far majority of people ask for their pension and will continue doing so for a very long time.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

No matter whether emerging, developing, or developed economies, the ageing population is reflected in rising numbers of older persons in the workforce and in rising labour force participation rates. Thereby, noticeable in rising shares of older workers within the workforce in all regions, no exception whatsoever, and for men and women alike. This has significant economic consequences and impacts for labour markets.

MYTH!

Some people consider that older persons don't learn as easily as young people. Research has clearly shown that this is true only if they interrupt learning throughout their lives. For example: If older persons have learned languages throughout their lives, it's just as easy to do it at the age of 60 as it was at the age of 20; but, if they stop at 20 and then they try to learn another language at 60, it's almost impossible.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

We need to make sure that we don't lose people on their way to becoming a healthy and productive older worker.

- Public employment services must have special services for older workers because their needs are different.
- Even if they have the same skills and the same motivation, if there are no jobs for them, it is of no help.
- Raising awareness in the working environments for implementing inclusive policies.
- Strengthening or creating adequate institutionality.

USEFUL SOURCES

- Employment, Labour Markets and Youth Branch (EMPLAB) | [Link](#)
- Public employment services and active labour market policies for transitions: Responses to mega trends and crises | [Link](#)
- Digitalization and Employment, A Review | [Link](#)
- An uneven and gender-unequal COVID-19 recovery: Update on gender and employment trends 2021 | [Link](#)



Focus: The use of ICTs for the inclusion of older persons in labor markets



Ms. Roxana Widmer-Iliescu
Senior Coordinator Digital Inclusion
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

“Almost 80% of the jobs will be transformed by including a digital component. Indeed, what in our day does not have a digital component?”

1. This world is increasingly becoming digital; therefore, we need to adapt to this new digital environment. Access to labour markets for older persons can be facilitated by inclusiveness through digital tools.
2. The very first step is to incorporate appropriate technology and to ensure that it is digitally accessible for everyone. Without this, we risk creating a huge digital gap, like never, ever before.
3. We speak about these opportunities that new technology can provide, but we also have to ensure that people have the possibility to afford the payment of the internet access as well as the right equipment, which in fact should be adapted to everyone needs.
4. An accessible technology is a smart technology which can be equally used by, let's say, a person with visual disability, or with hearing impairment, or by young person, and also by an older person, because we can play with the accessibility features.
5. One in four, one in three in some parts of the world, will be 60 years and above. This calls for a concrete and immediate action to ensure that everyone is skilled to be able to contribute to the socioeconomic global system. Older persons should be viewed as contributors to societies.

HIGHLIGHTS ON THE WORK OF THE ITU AND THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

The focus of the Digital Transformation priority is on (1) the development and use of telecommunications/ICTs, as well as applications and services, to close the digital divide and empower people and societies for sustainable development; (2) support to the ITU-D membership in fostering digital transformation through ICT entrepreneurship and increased ICT innovation in the ICT ecosystem, while encouraging the empowerment of grassroots stakeholders and creating new opportunities for them in the telecommunication/ICT sector. This is of critical importance as societies adapt to changes, including in the aftermath of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and with the future prospect of other global disasters. In this process, there is a need to recognize the needs of women, youth, persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs.





REMEMBER

It is very important to change a little bit the usual way we approach the topic of older persons. Not all older persons are vulnerable. Of course, that age and age-related disabilities are there but we still have the chance to age in a digital world and in a world in which, with all this evolution in terms of health and everything, many of these challenges can be overcome.

USEFUL SOURCES

ITU offers over 70 resources in ICT accessibility and about 10 resources on ageing. All ITU tools and resources are free of charge. Many of ITU resources are provided in multiple languages, localised where relevant, and most of these such as training courses, are additionally provided in digital accessible formats.

The Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) provides a platform for its Members and Partners to engage and collaborate with the aim of making digital transformation play a catalytic role in helping the world achieve the United Nations adopted Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Members have the opportunity to influence the decisions that impact their business. Partners have the opportunity to participate in their high-impact projects through co-financing. Their members can be partners, and non-Member Partners are welcome to join as Members.

By becoming an ITU-D member, you can participate in all ITU-D activities, including conferences, industry groups, Tech Talks, study groups, etc.

Everybody can contribute to mainstreaming knowledge on ageing, to create programs and policies to promote age diversity, to involve all end users!

- ITU work in [Ageing in a digital world \(itu.int\)](https://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/publications/ageing_in_a_digital_world/)
- [ITU Report on ageing in a digital world](#)
- ITU Telecommunications accessibility guidelines for older persons and persons with disabilities (F.790) | [Link](#)
- ITU-D [ICTs for better ageing and livelihood in the digital landscape](#). Online self-paced training available in English, French and Spanish. *To take the training course you must first register with the ITU Academy if you do not have yet an account.*
- [Ageing in a digital world](#) - from vulnerable to valuable. Available with captions in [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [English](#), [French](#), [Russian](#) and [Spanish](#).
- ITU work in [ICT Digital Accessibility](#) - ITU Resolutions, Global commitment and Resources.
- [Resources on ICT/digital accessibility \(itu.int\)](#)



Focus: The demographic impact on labor markets



Mr. Michael Herrmann

Adviser, Economics and Demography,
the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

“There must be an ageing strategy. It’s about the young, it’s about the old. It’s everybody in between.”

1. In November last year, the world population reached the 8 billion mark, and in the decades to come, the world population will continue to grow. However, underneath this global trend, there’s an increasing diversity, in demographic terms, among the countries.
2. More than 60% of the world population already live in countries where the total fertility rate that’s the average number of children per woman is 2.1 or less. So, this fall in fertility at the global level is the driver of population ageing at a regional or subnational or national level. Migration is another factor that contributes to rapid population ageing. So, population ageing is really the overarching demographic trend of the century. Many observers, not just policymakers but academics, have termed population ageing a population bomb.
3. Demographic dependency ratios are at the heart of many of the anxieties that countries have about ageing. We have also heard about the pressure on healthcare systems, on pension systems, and on social protection systems.
4. It would be wrong to draw a hasty conclusion that the ageing might negatively impact innovation or productive capacities. Countries are worried for other reasons with regards to ageing, they have to do with political and military might, but also about ethnic and cultural shifts of certain parts of the population.
5. Maybe the most common dependency ratio is to look at everybody under the age of 15 and everybody above the age of 65 in relationship to those in between and say everybody between those ages is of working age and everybody outside is dependent.

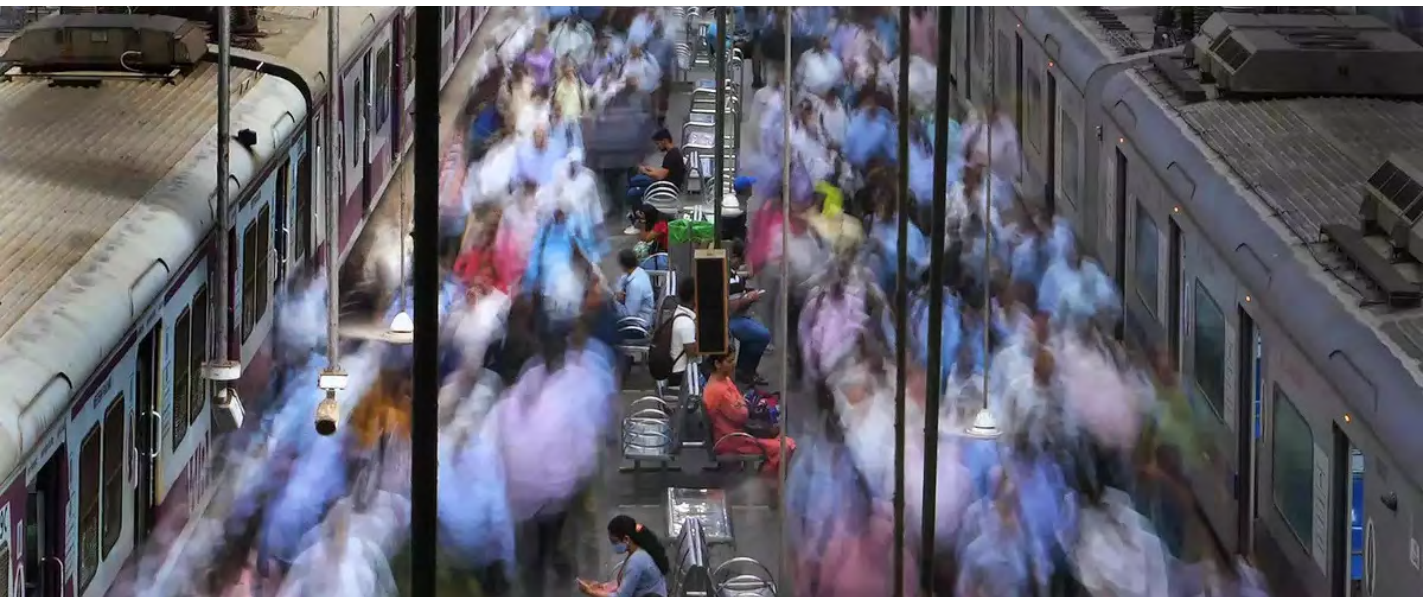
HIGHLIGHTS ON THE UNFPA AND ACCESS TO LABOR MARKETS

The UNFPA has created the Demographic Resilience Program to work with countries addressing demographic anxieties. It’s based on evidence and grounded in human rights to make sure that policy responses to demographic societies don’t contradict human rights or threaten a rollback. Its overarching objective is to help build societies that are resilient to and can thrive amidst demographic change. It requires that governments understand, plan for and shape demographic changes. Governments must systematically consider population data and projections and plan ahead. It’s also based on strengthening human capital throughout the life course. Another element of this program is helping countries build social systems based on population projections and actuarial analysis that are resilient to demographic change, infrastructure, service, and delivery.



There's another way of looking at dependency that's not chronological, but it's rather perspective. We count from the probable day or year of our death. We could say we don't automatically become dependent when we are 65, we become dependent when we are about ten years, 15 years away from our probable death. It has something to do with healthy life expectancy, which has increased a lot.

If we were to calculate dependency ratios that way, we will see that dependency ratios are also going to increase, but much less because we also live much longer. We are much healthier, and we have healthy life expectancies. A healthy life expectancy is not as long as life expectancy, but if we take that into consideration – the potential for longer work lives – dependency ratios don't increase as dramatically.



CURIOUS FACT

Although older persons create fewer new companies than younger persons, these survive longer.

DID YOU KNOW?

The UNFPA is working with 150 countries around the world to address demographic issues. While looking at the policy responses of countries, the UNFPA's team has realized that countries don't really anticipate population ageing. Likewise, they have highlighted that ageing is happening at the same time as other megatrends; it's difficult enough to think about ageing alone, but it strongly interacts with digitization, which has hugely important implications for the new world of work.

IMPORTANT

There is a need of designing social systems that fit for the new ageing reality and are cognizant of life paths that are much less linear than before. Moreover, the adoption of a life course

perspective on age that starts on childhood should be considered as a process, not as a state. We have to shift away from the approaches we currently have, which are reactive, negative, and fragmented, and more towards approaches that are forward looking, positive, and integrated.

USEFUL SOURCES

Learn more about the UNFPA's work and understanding of population dynamics, human rights, and cultural sensitivities through their Demographic Resilience Program and online data portal here:

National Transfer Accounts: Understanding the Generational Economy

[Link](#)

Ageing

[Link](#)



Focus: Discrimination challenges in labor markets



Mme. Anna Chabiera
Office of the Commissioner
for Human Rights of Poland

“The pervasiveness of ageism globally is such that discrimination, marginalization and exclusion of older persons are anticipated as the norm.”

1. The termination of employment for the sole reason of achieving retirement age is an example of discrimination in labour markets. 40% of our society does not perceive this act as discrimination; some people see it as a normal thing, to fire someone because he or she reached to retirement age. Although the existence of legislation that prohibits discrimination in labour markets, there is a huge awareness gap.
2. Only one third of the population has enough knowledge to tackle this issue and proceed with actions to combat this situation. This broader issue is tackled on a global level; the right to access labour markets is interconnected with other rights, with the right to health, the right to education, so we cannot tackle rights separately from each other because they are interconnected.
3. National Human Rights Institutions, NHRIs, deal with legislations, laws, and policies on an everyday basis because this is the right actor to tackle institutional ageism. For example, the global report on ageism published by the WHO refers to the laws, rules, social norms, policies and practices that institutions utilise to unfairly restrict opportunities and systematically disadvantage individuals because of their age.
4. The Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of Poland would like to commission a more in-depth analysis of Polish legislation and public policies to tackle institutional ageism.
5. Likewise, it is important to advocate for a new UN Convention on the Human Rights for older persons at national, regional, and global levels, as this would give us the international standards which should be implemented, and which would assure the right to work to older persons.

HIGHLIGHTS ON THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF POLAND

The National Human Rights is an equality body, which has other combined tasks with the title of an equality body. They monitor the state of equal treatment on labour markets and also on the ground of age, both in a legal framework and in practice. Polish law prohibits discrimination on the ground of age in the sector of employment – in line with the relevant EU legislation. It is the only sector where age discrimination is prohibited explicitly in Polish legislation.

As an equality body, they conduct research on discrimination. In one of the surveys, they frequently conduct since some years ago, they ask about examples of acts of discrimination and whether they perceive such acts as discrimination or not.



COMMISSIONER
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS





TO BEAR IN MIND

People with retirement age are not able to work because of social protections; this assumption directly impacts the policies and laws that should be making it less difficult for older persons to access labour markets.

COUNTRY REFERENCE

The definition of an unemployed person in Polish law indicates that there is “a person of working age.” In Poland, working age is until 60 for women and until 65 for men. It seems that the social protection in retirement age reduces the right to work in older age, as the measures foreseen for people in working age are not working for the benefit of older persons.

USEFUL SOURCES

Public Information Bulletin of the Polish Commissioner for Human Rights

<https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl>

NHRIs recommend to read the following document, entitled -“Substantive inputs in the form of normative content for the development of a possible international standard on the focus areas “right to work and access to the labour market” and “access to justice” - submitted by the Office of the High Commissioner to the Human Rights to the 12 Session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing Twelfth Session.

[Link](#)



Focus: Analysis on the legal gaps at international level on access to labor markets for older persons



Dr. Michael Ashley Stein

Co-founder and Executive Director of the Harvard Law School Project on Disability, Visiting Professor at Harvard Law School

“How can we create societies where those who have contributed in various ways can feel that they are valued as older persons?”

1. We should ask ourselves: Where is the efficiency for knowledge on how the workplace works? Where is the efficiency for mentoring individuals?
2. We no longer try to assess efficiency by the idea of producing 40 widgets in an hour. It's based upon other ideas and larger benefits to the larger group of employees, and why we should not include those as part of efficiency.
3. We have populations of marginalized people who are considered as extra or excess. It is important to reflect on who it was, who was excluded from the labour market after 2008, and who was excluded from COVID relief systems during the Pandemic.
4. There is a tension between economics and efficiency, and between human rights and dignity. They're not mutually exclusive, but they are two different languages with two different goals. Each of them has certain values that are embedded in them that perhaps don't always come across.
5. If we're going to simply use one packet of ideas rather than the others from the economic position, there are several solutions to the idea of older persons' unemployment. One is the delayed retirement that the OECD and other entities have been pressing for. The other is mass immigration, which is not going to happen for reasons of politics, culture, etc.

This is not an acceptable answer to someone who cares about dignity. Overall questions as we move forward that need to be discussed include the impact of Artificial Intelligence, the idea of cognitive load, and the idea that telework can and should be a viable alternative.

HIGHLIGHTS ON THE HARVARD LAW SCHOOL PROJECT ON DISABILITY

HPOD has demonstrated a steadfast dedication to empowering civil society and other actors by fostering knowledgeable and discerning advocacy for Human Rights. Their endeavours encompass a range of activities, including the provision of comprehensive human rights training and education, the facilitation of international law and policy development, the promotion of inclusive practices in development, the dissemination of technical assistance pertaining to strategic litigation, and the cultivation of innovative perspectives regarding the capabilities of persons with disabilities and their entitlement to human rights.



Harvard Law School
Project on Disability





FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Authorities may be thinking about the price of gas now, the cost of social protection or who will re-lect them now. If we are going to use this as a pivot point, how can we create societies where those who have contributed in various ways can feel that they are valued as older persons? The hidden costs faced when the newer, younger, cheaper worker has to figure out how the workplace, must need to be considered as well.

IMPORTANT

That older persons can contribute with their experience and their knowledge is one thing, but we don't talk about inefficiency for older workers when it is about their institutional memories and how they understand how places of business work, whether their own particular ones or similar ones that they operate. Where is the efficiency for knowledge and knowing how the workplace works? Where is the efficiency for mentoring individuals? Where are the costs hidden? As far as we know about training, we know about hiring and retention?

REMEMEBER!

When we think about Information and Communication Technologies, we ought to be thinking, what are the values that underlie employers? What are the values that underlie labour markets? What are the values of creating social policies and what is it that we want to support and what is it that we may want to turn away from or change with AI? If anything, the numbers range between 800 million and 1 billion jobs lost between 2030 to 2035. The persons who are older and who are alleged not to be as adept at ICT, where will they fit in this? Planning and inclusion must be done, but this is a problem because politicians have budgets and short mandates of power, not prioritizing long term solutions.

USEFUL SOURCES

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | [Link](#)





Decade of healthy ageing



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