



## PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 14th June 2017

*Elder Abuse Awareness Day, 15 June*

### **Let's break the silence: Older persons suffering abuse need protection and support!**

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**On the occasion of the 12th World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, 15 June 2017, it is urgent to remind to policymakers, to all those advocating for human and social rights and to society as a whole of the pervasiveness and devastating effects that abuse, violence and neglect have on older persons. Elder abuse is an extended but hidden reality that older persons suffer most times in silence and fear. On 14 June 2017 AGE Platform Europe organised a workshop jointly with the Council of Europe, the European Commission and Victim Support Europe in order to explore how to increase reporting and improve the protection of victims.**

*"AGE is glad to organize this event together with the Council of Europe and the European Commission", declared **Anne-Sophie Parent**, Secretary-General of AGE Platform Europe. "This is a great opportunity to share experiences at European level and raise awareness of the key importance of finding ways to prevent and tackle elder abuse in this period of demographic ageing. Rights for citizens who suffer violence and abuse exist across Europe, but older persons face additional challenges in enjoying them as a consequence of lack of awareness and ageist attitudes. Moreover, many older persons are in a particularly vulnerable situation as a result of additional discriminations on the basis of gender, race or ethnic origin, religion, disability or sexual orientation".*

**Věra Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, stated: *"The increasing number of elderly people in Europe due to longer life expectancy is a positive development we can be proud of. But we should also know it may increase the risk of elder abuse, not only physical or psychological but also neglect or financial exploitation. This is not only a matter of concern for the Member States. The EU has also developed a number of initiatives important for protecting older people from discrimination and abuse. The Victims' Rights Directive entails victim protection mechanisms and support*

*services that need to be made better known to older persons who may suffer abuse. Another example is our recent Work Life Balance proposal. Our aim is to strengthen the rights and improve conditions for carers to reconcile work and care responsibilities. This equally will be beneficial for people who are depending on care."*

All too often older persons in situations of dependency and with high care needs suffer abuse in silence, both at home and in residential care settings. It is estimated that 3% of older Europeans suffer maltreatment, and up to 25% of those with high care needs, but only about 20% of the cases of elder abuse are actually reported. As highlighted during AGE's Annual Conference on 7 June 2017, such abuse and violence is one of the most serious violations of older persons' human rights. The selection of this societal challenge as one of the topics for discussion at the next [Open-ended Working Group on Ageing of the United Nations](#) is an acknowledgment that further action is needed worldwide to tackle elder abuse.

Preventative measures need to go hand in hand with actions to increase reporting of elder abuse and offer protection and support to older persons who are suffering or have suffered abuse, violence and neglect. As explained in [AGE's recent position paper around the protection of victims of elder abuse](#), older persons suffering abuse too often experience feelings of shame, resignation and powerlessness that prevent them from seeking protection. Moreover, there is a lack of awareness of available rights and protection services among older persons, and little knowledge about elder abuse and the needs of older victims among police and support and protection services.

The 2012 Victims' Rights Directive sets minimum standards of protection and support for all victims regardless of the crime. It offers an opportunity to improve the access of older persons who suffer abuse and violence to their rights. Multiagency cooperation between victim support organisations, policymakers, police and legal officers and organisations of older persons will facilitate an effective implementation of the Directive.

AGE Platform Europe will continue fighting to put elder abuse high on the agenda of the European Union and to facilitate the sharing of all the valuable practices that exist across Europe.

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### **Useful links**

- [Joint AGE workshop on the protection and support for victims of elder abuse](#)

## **Note to the editor**



**AGE Platform Europe** is a European network of organisations of and for people aged 50+ representing directly over 40 million older people in Europe. AGE aims to voice and promote older people's interests in the European Union and to raise awareness of the issues that concern them most.

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