



Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth



Joint press release

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The rights of older people in times of digitalisation

International conference calls for action by the European Union

Promoting human rights in old age is the focus of an international online conference taking place today and tomorrow (28 and 29 September). The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated digitalisation, among others, for social interactions, access to information and service provision. This increased recourse to digital technologies is not without consequences for our human rights, especially in older age.

High-ranking officials from the European Commission and from several EU Member States as well as representatives of European older people's organisations will discuss how older people can benefit more from digitalisation. The conference is jointly organised by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, AGE Platform Europe and BAGSO – the German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations. It takes place in the context of Germany's Presidency of the Council of the EU.

“Digitalisation offers great opportunities for social participation and self-determined living in old age, also and especially under difficult conditions. These opportunities must be used. The last few months, in particular, have shown that if people cannot participate in society through the use of digital technologies there is a greater risk of them becoming lonely,” highlights Dr. Franziska Giffey, Federal Minister for Senior Citizens.

“To enable people of all ages to take advantage of the opportunities offered by digitalisation, we must ensure that everyone is equipped with the necessary equipment and skills. Also older people. This is an important prerequisite for older people to continue to exercise their right to information, education, social participation, health and much more, said BAGSO President Franz Müntefering.

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The President of AGE Platform Europe, Ebbe Johansen, sees the conference as an opportunity for civil society to engage with policy makers: “This conference provides a forum for debate that we believe has long been necessary; digitalisation carries many opportunities but it cannot go without better protections for our human rights. Policy makers have a responsibility to develop the laws and policies that will make digital environments accessible, friendly, and safe for all to engage”.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the conference will be held in an exclusively digital format. Participants include European Commission Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, Dubravka Šuica, European Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli, and United Nations’ Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Dr. Claudia Mahler.