

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Event

Remarks by

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- Thank you for the invitation to participate in this event. It is very valuable to bring people together for World Elder Abuse Day and it has been interesting to listen to the other speakers. I wanted to take this opportunity to mention that the EU will also be marking World Elder Abuse Day with a Conference in Brussels next week, 17-18 June in Brussels. The Conference next week is a collaboration between the EU and the OHCHR. The idea of the meeting is to provide for an exchange of views between human rights specialists and prominent researchers, care reformers, policymakers and activists.
- The EU is fully seized by the challenges of an ageing society and the rights of older people are high on the agenda of the EU's policies in the respective sectors. Among the concerns that need addressing is the need for adequate protection and for strengthening the enjoyment by older persons of their human rights.
- In the EU, demographic change over the coming decades will bring a rise in the number of people aged 80 and over. By 2060 the percentage of people aged 80 and over in the EU will have increased threefold to around 12% of the total population. Most people over 80 can be expected to be able to live independently, but a large minority are likely to be dependent for prolonged periods on help from others.
- Providing adequate care will be a major challenge: more people will need it, especially when the large baby-boom generation, now beginning to turn 60, reach their 80s. So clearly the need for care is set to rise. At the same time, fewer carers could be available due to demographic trends and other factors, such as labour market participation. In addition to this, public provision of care may face financial constraints to ensure that public finances are sustainable as ageing-related needs increase.

- The frail elderly are a vulnerable group of people and it is crucial to address the question of safeguarding their dignity in this changing demographic context. We know that to prevent elder abuse and to ensure high quality care, action is needed in many areas.
- Elder abuse is not primarily the result of bad intentions. It is often a systemic failure. It can result from inadequate knowledge, or it can be due to overburdening and stress on the part of professional or family caregivers. In professional care settings, poor standards of care and inadequate staffing may all lead to elder abuse. But again, in such situations elder abuse is often a systemic and organizational problem of the institution rather than individual professional failure or deliberate violence.
- Care at home brings with it particular strains, not least for the health, well-being and social contacts of those providing it. Families and women in particular, sometimes have to sacrifice a great deal to look after relatives.
- We need to tackle these problems. The main responsibility for preventing elder abuse remains at national and local level. However, let me mention briefly some activities at the EU level.
- In the context of Social Protection, EU Member States agreed in 2006 on three common objectives in the area of long term care:
 - the first is to secure access for all to adequate care,
 - the second is to promote quality in care,
 - the third objective is to ensure the financial sustainability of long term care systems.
- These three goals are interlinked. Throughout 2013 in the context of social protection the European Commission and EU Member States are working together on elaborating a report on ensuring high quality long term care. This report will be available at the end of 2013.
- The EU is also funding projects in this area. One example that could be given here is "Ciel Bleu", a French project that thanks to the EU funding was rolled out in other EU Member States, including Belgium and Ireland. It is a model of a nursing home for

the elderly that provides a holistic model of care and gives choice and control to the residents over their daily activities.

- Combating elder abuse is an important subject for the EU. Since 2008, two high level conferences on this issue have been organised allowing EU Member States to exchange good practices in the field.
- Elder abuse is a multifaceted issue that can be best addressed in a horizontal, interdisciplinary way. Therefore, the EU is working closely with other stakeholders, including UN bodies and programmes such as WTO. We work with OHCHR to mainstream human rights into the way long term care services are provided. We also work with Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on evaluation of quality of care.
- I also wanted to mention in this context the 2012 European Year on Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. With the European Year 2012 the EU promoted policies for active ageing in different areas- e.g. employment, social protection and inclusion, health, transport. The Year generated a number of activities throughout the EU. There were "Guiding principles on active ageing and solidarity between generations" endorsed by EU Member States. An Active Ageing Index was developed jointly by UNECE and the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy in Vienna. Several EU Member States established new advisory bodies for the elderly or developed national strategies and action plans. An award scheme to honour excellent ideas in the field of active ageing was introduced. Also, 600 schools organised encounters between students and older people.
- These are the ongoing initiatives I wanted to mention today and I will stop here. To conclude elder abuse is an issue of human rights but also a social investment. Clearly, initiatives in this area need to continue, as well as exchanges like the one we are having today.