



“Digitalisation and the human rights of older persons”

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Plan

- Icebreaker
- What Are Human Rights?
- What is a Human Rights-Based Approach?
- Human Rights of Older Persons in the Digital Age
- Conclusion and Wrap Up



Icebreaker: Human Rights Headlines

- Imagine it is the year 2035.
- You are a team of journalists reporting on a **major breakthrough** in the human rights of older persons in digitalisation.
- What would be the headline on the front page of tomorrow's newspaper?
- Explain why this event/policy change/success story is a major step forward towards enhancing the human rights of older persons in digitalisation.
- Mention what human right is at stake.

What Are Human Rights?



“Human rights matter because they are dependent on only one thing:
being human.
... human rights are not country specific.
They are not a reward for good behaviour, or particular to a certain era
or social group. They are the inalienable entitlements of all people, at
all times and everywhere, 365 days a year.”

Zeid Raad Al Hussein, Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Human rights

- **UNIVERSAL:** Human rights are rights that all people are entitled to have.
- **INALIENABLE:** We have human rights simply because we are human. They cannot be taken away.
- **INDIVISIBLE:** Their enjoyment depends on the full enjoyment of all rights.
- **EQUAL:** They ensure that people are treated fairly and with respect.
- **ACCOUNTABLE:** Human rights are guaranteed by international treaties.

Human rights obligations

The Government has to:



Respect



Refrain from interfering with the enjoyment of the right

Protect



Prevent others from interfering with the enjoyment of the right

Fulfil



Adopt appropriate measures towards the full realization of the right

Difference between Human Rights and Fundamental Rights

Difference in terminology depends on the legal order and legal framework but they mean the same.

In the EU = Fundamental Rights

- EU Charter of Fundamental Rights
- EU Agency for Fundamental Rights
- Fundamental Rights Working Group

Outside the EU = Human Rights

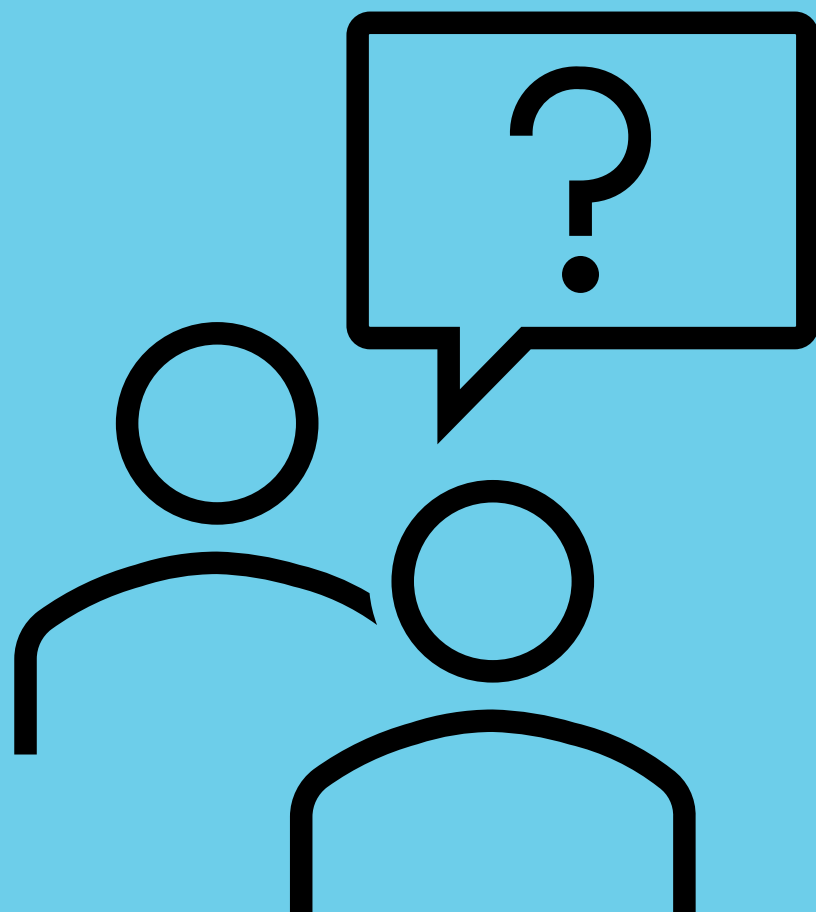
- EU Action Plan of Human Rights and Democracy
- Application of international human rights Treaties, e.g., Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

Collective Reflexion

- Can you give examples of specific **digital rights**?
 -

European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles

- Promotes a digital transition shaped by European values.
- The principles are shaped around 6 themes:
 - Putting people and their rights at the centre of the digital transformation.
 - Supporting solidarity and inclusion.
 - Ensuring freedom of choice online.
 - Fostering participation in the digital public space.
 - Increasing safety, security and empowerment of individuals (especially young people).
 - Promoting the sustainability of the digital future
- Available [here](#).



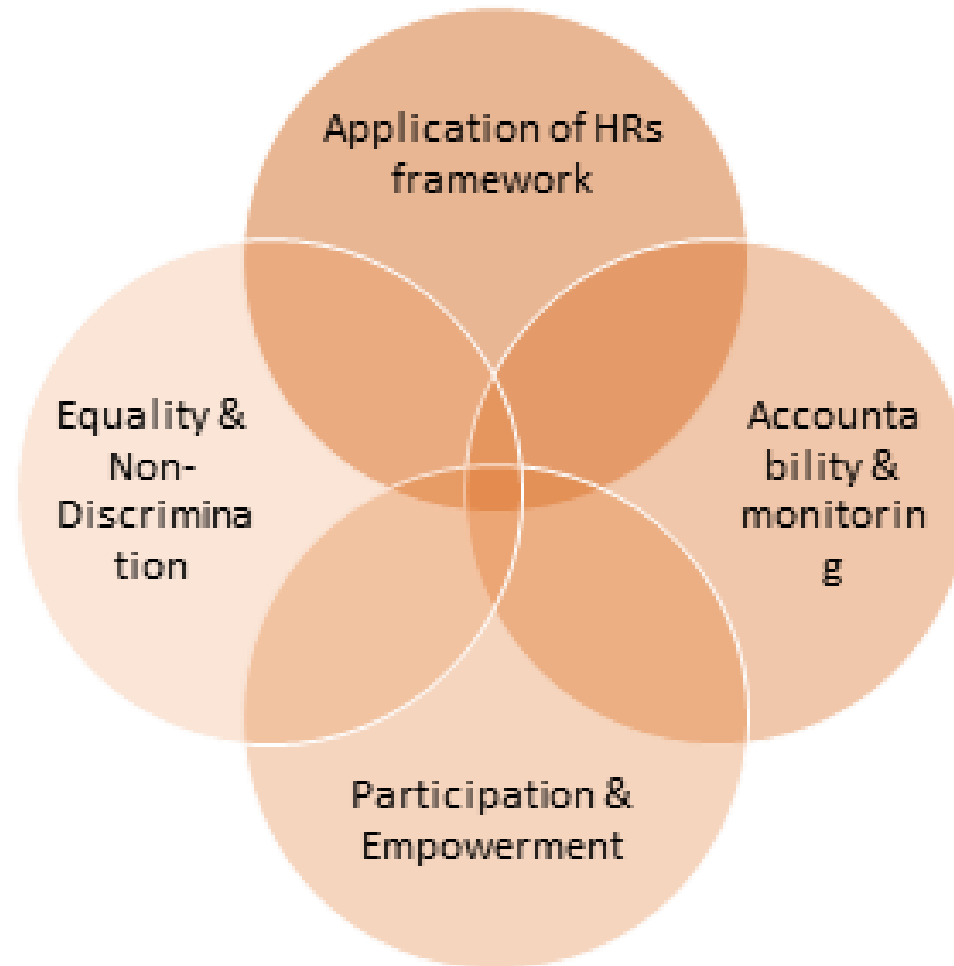
What Is a Human Rights-Based Approach?



What is a Human Rights-Based Approach?

- Framework that ensures that human rights are at the heart of policies, programmes and projects.
- Way of working based on and aiming to realise human rights.
- Recognizes the **diversity of older people**.
- Is based on the universality of human rights, i.e., older people should enjoy all human rights on an equal basis with others.
- Uses international human rights principles and standards to ensure older people's rights are put at the centre of policies and practices.
- Recognizes older people as **holders of rights** and not passive objects of charity and values their contributions.
- Aims to **empower older people to participate in all aspects of life**, in decision-making processes that affect their lives and those of others and to know and demand better protection of their rights.
- Aims to build **internal and external capacity** to meet human rights obligations and better protect and promote human rights in old age but also learn from others (including members, other networks, advisers/consultants).
- A **continuous process**, which includes planning, action, and evaluation.

Main Pillars of a Human Rights-Based Approach



Application of the Human Rights Framework

A human rights-based approach requires the recognition of **rights as legally enforceable entitlements and is linked to national and international human rights law.**

How to understand and use legal standards/obligations?

- Each of the UN treaty bodies publishes its interpretation of the provisions of its respective human rights treaty in the form of “[general comments](#)” or “general recommendations”.
- Relevant case law.
- Equality bodies and National Human Rights Institutions.
- Human rights organisations and advocacy reports.

Participation and Empowerment

- Individuals and communities should know their rights and should be fully supported to participate in the development of policy, decision-making and services/products which affect their human rights.
- They should also be able to claim their rights where necessary.

Participation and Empowerment (2)

- Are (older) people **aware** of the scope and nature of their rights?
- How can human rights be realized in practice?
- How to claim their rights in case of violation?
- Do (older) people receive **training, support, information, and knowledge** to participate in consultations and claim their rights?
- Is attention given to aspects of **accessibility** to enable full participation? (e.g., physical accessibility, but also language)?

Accountability and Monitoring

- A human rights-based approach requires effective monitoring of human rights standards, evaluation of measures as well as effective remedies for human rights breaches.

Guide to Avoid Stereotypical Communication when Talking about Ageing and Older Persons – Language

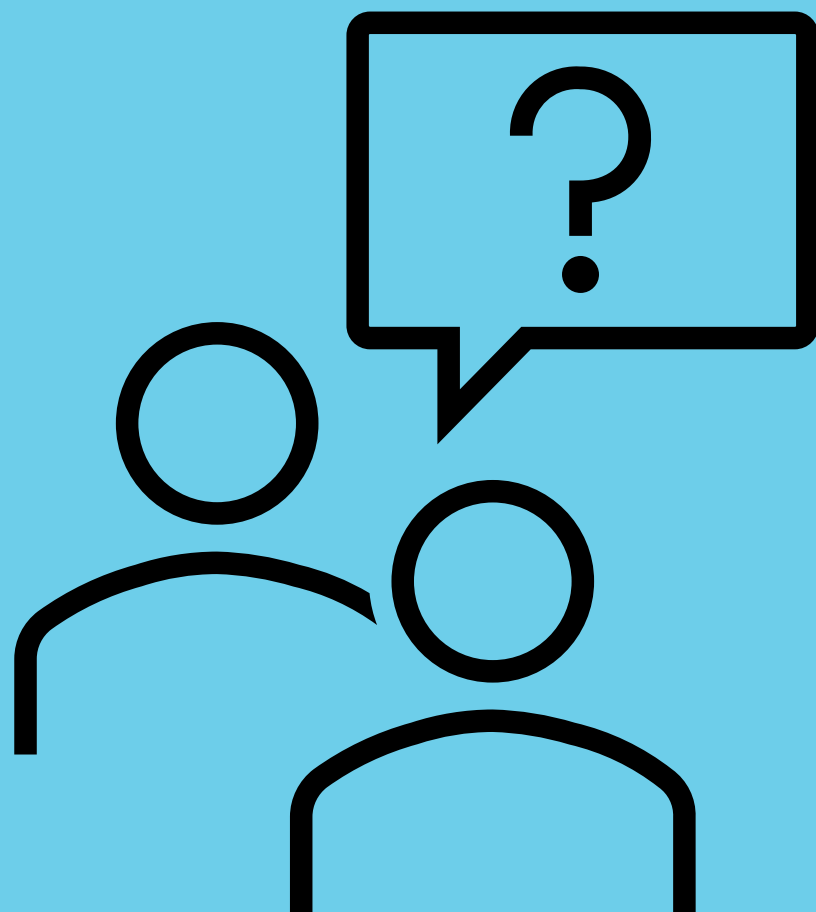
<i>Instead of...</i>	<i>Prefer to...</i>
Catastrophic terms about growing population of older people (“time bomb”, “silver tsunami”)	Talk affirmatively about longer and healthier lives and ageing as an opportunity
References to youth to describe older age (“accumulated youth”) or positive aspects of one’s personality (“young at heart”)	Use direct affirmation of being old (“I’m old and that’s ok”) or alternative adjectives to describe positive aspects of one’s personality
Terms that are homogenising and stoking stereotypes (“seniors”, “elderly”)	Use “older people” or “older adults” that are more neutral
Pronouns (“they”, “them”) or framing that are “other-ing” older people as a group to set aside assuming they are different from “we”	Use “we” and “us” pronouns in reference to the universal experience of ageing and giving a voice to self-advocates
Possessive assuming older people are someone’s property (“our older people”)	Remove the possessive pronouns
Adjectives around frailty to describe a whole age group (“vulnerable”, “at-risk” population)	Specify the risk factors that are putting people in situations of vulnerability

Guide to Avoid Stereotypical Communication when Talking about Ageing and Older Persons – Images (1/2)

- Prefer pictures **showing people's faces**.
- Try to represent **diversity** in older age in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, ability, etc.
- Avoid pictures of hunched-over person.
- Prefer **group pictures** instead of lonely older people.
- Prefer promoting **active** representations.
- Prefer **coloured** pictures instead of black and white or sepia.
- AGE guidelines available [here](#).

Guide to Avoid Stereotypical Communication when Talking about Ageing and Older Persons – Images (2/2)





Human Rights of Older Persons in the Digital Age



Group Work

- Pick up one **new/emerging technology**.
- What **rights** are in play?
- Imagine a scenario where that new/emerging technology could advance older people's human rights.
- Then, explain how that new/emerging technology could also deny older people's human rights?
- What could be done to enhance the human rights of older persons in your specific scenario?

How Does a Smooth Digital Transition for Older People Look Like in Policy Recommendations?

- Collect and make available more **data** on digital technologies in old age.
- Tackle **ageism** to dismantle stereotypes about older people and digital technologies.
- To ensure **full accessibility** to close the digital divide.
- **Human rights** must serve as a compass to digitalisation.
- For more information, you can consult our [policy paper](#) on Digitalisation and Older People.

Useful Resources

- [Digitalisation and older people – our call to EU policymakers](#), AGE Platform Europe, 2024
- [The Complex Gender Face of Digital Exclusion in Old Age](#), AGE Platform Europe, 2023
- [Towards an EU Age Equality Strategy: Delivering equal rights at all ages](#), AGE Platform Europe
- [2-pager](#)-Towards an EU Age Equality Strategy: Delivering equal rights at all ages, AGE Platform Europe
- [What is a rights-based approach to ageing?](#), AGE Platform Europe
- [Gender inequality in old age](#), AGE Platform Europe, 2025

Useful Resources (2)

- [Short Guide to Avoid Stereotypical Communication When Talking About Ageing and Older People](#), AGE Platform Europe

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