



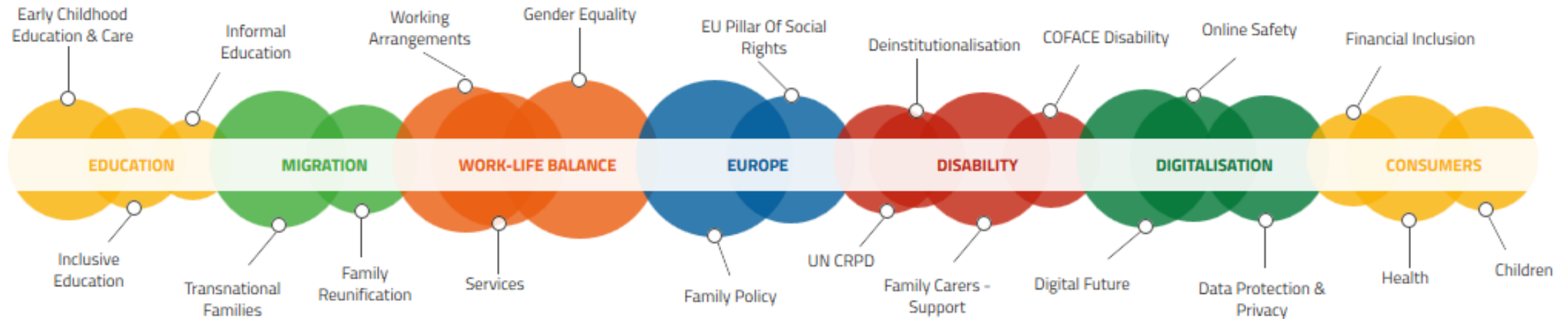
Human rights of older persons: How can families ensure older person's freedom, choice and dignity?

International Conference on the Occasion of International Day of Older Persons:
“Human Rights of Older Persons in the Czech republic”
Prague, 1st October

Elizabeth Gosme, Director, COFACE Families Europe

COFACE Families Europe

- Pluralistic NGO (58 organisations in 23 EU Member States)
- Values: Non-discrimination, Human rights, Social inclusion etc.
- Represent, advocate for the rights and interest of all types of families
- Family carers and long-term care agenda driving by COFACE Disability
- Monitor EU initiatives, build the capacity of COFACE network
- Partnerships: AGE Platform Europe (Human Rights [Manifesto](#))



Panel discussion

- *What role for families in ensuring human rights of older people?*
- *To what extent are older persons threatened by inaccessibility of housing, by poverty or by barriers in public space?*
- *How are the social and health services available for them - do older persons have a choice between institutional residential services or care in their own environment?*
- *Are they enabled to spend their time actively?*
- *What are their lifelong learning opportunities in the context of digitalisation?*
- *How is it in European countries?*
- *Should older persons be granted specific human rights other than basic human rights, like in the case of women or children?*

Family dimension

- Life-cycle approach to family: from birth to old age.
- Non-discrimination of older persons and their families. All families must have equal rights, without discrimination.
- When a family member needs long-term care, this brings significant changes in the family life.
- When State support is lacking, the financial stability and well-being of all family members can be easily eroded.
- From a family perspective, age and disability are blurred since family carers support their family members requiring care or support based on their needs as an individual.
- Gender dimension: The highest share of care is provided by women aged 50 or older, often experiencing themselves ageism and lack of social inclusion.

Age, disability and the need for a family dimension in long-term care, by Irene Bertana, COFACE Policy officer

Age & Disability

- As the EU population is ageing and in the last years of life many are acquiring disabilities, the number of **older people with disabilities is increasing** accordingly. In the EU-27, 8.5 % of people aged 15–44 reported a disability in 2012, with this share more than doubling to 18.8 % among those aged 45–64 and nearly doubling again to 35.6 % for the age group covering those aged 65 and over.
- **As such, people aged 65 and over were 4.2 times as likely to report a disability as people aged 15–44.** Among the EU Member States, this ratio ranged from 1.7 in Belgium and the Netherlands to 10.1 in the Czech Republic, 10.6 in Greece and 11.3 in Portugal, peaking at 14.9 in Romania (source: [Eurostat 2015](#))
- When persons with disabilities get older, or when older persons face disabilities, they are more likely to receive **low standards of care and support**, to be excluded from benefits and other support schemes, and to end up in residential institutions due to lack of alternatives.

Family & prevention of institutionalisation

- The **right to self-determination**, to choose where and with whom to live and respect for one's dignity are universal human rights that apply to everyone.
- There is growing recognition that long-term care policies and services need to **abandon paternalistic and medical approaches**, and integrate both health and social care, including support for independent living of persons, as well as empowerment of informal carers and participation.
- Implementing older persons' rights is also to ensure that **families can be in a position to care for them** (work-life balance, access to resources, training on nursing, and a wider system that recognises family carers).
- It is highly relevant to the question on the **choice between institutional or residential services**, because if they receive support at home from both family and professional carers, then they will have a real choice between staying in their community or creating a new community in residential care.
- Enforce effectively the right to quality and affordable long-term care and support that allows older and persons with disabilities in need of care to remain autonomous and independent, and get fully involved in their communities, as part of the action plan to implement the **European Pillar of Social Rights**.

Role of Europe

- **Implement European Pillar of Social Rights principles** (equal opportunities, right to long-term care, work-life balance, inclusion of persons with disabilities, access to services, social protection, life-long learning).
- Policy reforms should be built in an integrated and **holistic way with a life-cycle approach by addressing also needs and rights of the care sector staff and of informal carers.**
- Improve **data collection** and develop **harmonised definitions, indicators and corresponding European targets** on long-term care to assess the affordability, the accessibility, the quality and the availability of services.
- Encourage **innovation** in the sector and the sharing of good practices between member states and regions.
- Support the provision of **adequate and sufficient public funding** to long-term care through the European Semester.
- Strengthen the use of **European funds** to improve the quality of life of persons in need of care and of informal carers.
- Guarantee a systematic and meaningful **involvement of civil society** in policymaking processes. Especially organisations representing older people and their families.
- **Monitor the role of the private sector in long-term care** in terms of quality and affordability of services, and explore how the EU could better regulate this growing market.



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