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Access to justice, the right to work and access to the labor market of older people in Serbia. Challenges to achieving equality

Dostęp do wymiaru sprawiedliwości, prawo do pracy i dostęp do rynku pracy osób starszych w Serbii. Wyzwania w dążeniu do równości

Abstract: Access to justice, the right to work, and access to the labor market are essential aspects of modern society that enable individuals to achieve just and fair solutions to their problems. Achieving such solutions often includes judicial processes and other means of solving disputes, such as mediation. The concept of justice mainly relies on the right to work, which includes safe and just working conditions, access to training and salary sufficient for an adequate standard of dignified life for workers and their families, and the right of individuals not to be wrongfully deprived of work. Access to justice, the right to work, and access to the labor market were topics of consultations conducted in June 2019 within the framework of “Age Demands Action” (ADA) platform with a view of ensuring the voice of older persons is heard at the eleventh session of the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing in April 2020. Three hundred six older persons (198 women and 108 men) between the ages of 52 and 90 in 24 low-income, middle-income, and high-income countries across the world, including Serbia, participated in the consultations to show obstacles

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in achieving older persons' access to justice, work and labor market. As part of this global initiative, research conducted by the Red Cross of Serbia in Velika Plana, Kragujevac, and Belgrade included focus groups of 26 participants in total, aged between 65 and 85, predominantly female. The results of interviews with these focus groups show that, when it comes to access to justice, most of the participants face challenges in property and inheritance distribution, access to public services, as well as age discrimination. Labor-rights-wise, they pointed out that these rights are mainly denied to them due to their age and that their health (both psychological and physical) is often a limiting factor in employment. For most respondents, decent work means adequate working conditions, meeting their everyday needs, decent working hours, and respect for the worker's integrity. To gain access to justice, older persons must be empowered and supported in taking action toward the problem and achieving fair and just solutions. A prerequisite for that is access to services that would help anti-discriminatory treatment and meet their needs, including respect for older persons' human rights and dignified life in older age, including equal opportunities in accessing the labor market.

Keywords: older persons, access to justice, right to work, human rights, access to the labor market

Streszczenie: Dostęp do wymiaru sprawiedliwości, prawo do pracy i dostęp do rynku pracy to obszary stanowiące kluczowe elementy współczesnego społeczeństwa, gdzie problemy jednostek rozwiązywane są w uczciwy i sprawiedliwy sposób. Osiągnięcie tego typu rozwiązań może obejmować zarówno procesy sądowe, jak i mediację. Koncepcja sprawiedliwości opiera się głównie na prawie do pracy, które obejmuje bezpieczne i sprawiedliwe warunki pracy, dostęp do szkoleń oraz wynagrodzenie wystarczające do godnego życia pracownikom i ich rodzinom, a także ochrony praw pracowników wynikających ze stosunku pracy. Wspomniane obszary były tematem konsultacji przeprowadzonych w czerwcu 2019 roku w ramach platformy „Age Demands Action” (ADA), które referowane były w trakcie jedenaściej sesji Grupy Roboczej ds. Starzenia się przy ONZ w kwietniu 2020 roku. W konsultacjach wzięło udział 306 osób starszych (198 kobiet i 108 mężczyzn) w wieku od 52 do 90 lat z 24 krajów o niskich, średnich i wysokich dochodach *per capita*, w tym z Serbii. Celem tych spotkań była identyfikacja przeszkód w dostępie starszych osób do wymiaru sprawiedliwości, a także do rynku pracy. W ramach tej globalnej inicjatywy pracownicy Serbskiego Czerwonego Krzyża przeprowadzili badania w trzech miastach – Velika Plana, Kragujevacu i Belgradzie. W badaniach fokusowych udział wzięło łącznie 26 uczestników w wieku od 65 do 85 lat, głównie kobiety. Wyniki wskazują, że osoby stare borykają się z takimi trudnościami jak podział majątku, dziedziczenie, dostęp do usług publicznych oraz dyskryminacja ze względu na wiek. W odniesieniu do rynku pracy badane osoby zwróciły uwagę, że prawa do dalszego świadczenia pracy są im odmawiane ze względu na wiek, stan zdrowia, a także brak wolnych etatów. Przy czym godna praca była przez nie definiowana w kontekście zapewnienia przez pracodawcę odpowiednich warunków pracy, zaspokajania ich codziennych potrzeb, elastycznych godzin pracy oraz szacunku do starszego pracownika. Wyniki przeprowadzonych badań wskazują, że uzyskanie przez osoby starsze dostępu do wymiaru sprawiedliwości wiązać należy z podejmowaniem działań społecznych nakierowanych na rozwiązywanie ich problemów, a także zwiększenie dostępu do usług antydyskryminacyjnych.

Słowa kluczowe: osoby stare, dostęp do wymiaru sprawiedliwości, prawo pracy, prawa człowieka, dostęp do rynku pracy

Introduction

Demographic aging is a sign of progress but also a challenge for modern society since it opens up a space for reviewing economic and social policies concerning older persons. Equal treatment in old age requires an absence of discrimination, timely information, available services and care for older persons, and the possibility of active participation of older members in the community. All things listed require respect for human rights, which are universal and applicable to everyone, regardless of age. They represent the frame from which respect for the integrity and dignity of an individual arises, and they regulate policies and matters of conduct in particular areas and situations. Respecting the human rights of older persons is critical to achieving a minimum of financial security, which is essential for a dignified life in the older age, access to adequate health care, and provision of community-based social welfare services. Equally important is to ensure systematic prevention of neglect and violence and support the participation of older persons in decision-making on matters that concern them directly (Satarić, 2015).

Nevertheless, there is a feeling that society often remains deaf to the needs of older persons. One of the challenges in advocating their rights is defining what “older population” means – old age is a relative concept, so it is difficult to determine who qualifies as an older citizen and who does not (Megret, 2011). However, it is widely accepted to use social criteria, which is the legal retirement age. In Serbia, this is the age of 65 for men and 63 for women.

Problems that older persons face are mainly related to exercising their rights or violation of their rights. In a battle for justice, they face many obstacles, such as the unavailability of resources and services, lack of understanding of institutions and decision-makers, and invisibility to the broader society. Older persons are frequently deprived of different types of rights, and some of the most frequently breached are the right to freedom from discrimination, the right to social and health protection, the right to work, personal property, and inheritance, and the right to protection against violence. Response to that kind of unequal treatment must be an effort to find fair and just solutions and ensure access to justice in which equal treatment is guaranteed and age-based discrimination does not exist. Demographic trends in the Republic of Serbia are similar to those in the countries in the Western Balkans region as well as in Europe in general. The increasing share of older persons in the population is a steady trend in the 21st century globally and is expected to continue for decades. The estimated population size in the Republic of Serbia in 2022 was 6,647,003 (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2023), and the proportion of the population aged 65 and over was 22.10%. The depopulation trend

continued, meaning that the population growth rate, compared with the census in 2011, was negative; the total population shrunk by 539,859 persons or 7.5% in the twelve years. The proportion of the population aged under 15 (0–14) fell from 14.4% in 2011 to 14.37% in 2022, while the percentage of the population aged 65 and over increased from 17.3% (2011) to 22.10% (2022). The population's average age increased from 42.1 years (2011) to 43.8 (2022). (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2023) The life expectancy declined from 74.337 in 2010 to 73 in 2021, but this is due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, it was on a steady rise, reaching its apex in 2019 (75.685) (World Bank, 2023). Healthy life expectancy has been estimated at 66.9 years in 2019 (World Data Atlas, 2023), and this information indicates that, on average, there is a window of 4–6 years in which older persons will need assistance in their activities of daily life.

All demographic projections foresee a further increase in the share of older persons in Serbia. The latest Statistical Yearbook estimates that the share of the population over 65 will reach 24% by 2040 while the “older older” population, those over 80, will reach 7.4% of the total population in 2040 (this share was 4.6% in 2021). (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2022)

Access to Justice

As a core value of the law, access to justice means finding a fair and just solution to an individual's problem. Realizing effective justice through which an older person reaches total respect for human and civil rights requires a judicial system that enables older persons to exercise their rights and guarantees effective measures and equal treatment of older persons before the court and other institutions, as well as equal protection in the eyes of the law without discrimination (Gutterman, 2022). Justice is not possible to reach in an environment where fear of the system is present, especially when it comes to marginalized groups and in cases where accessing the judicial system is financially untenable. Reaching justice is unattainable in cases where individuals need lawyers, information, or knowledge about their rights or if the judicial system needs to be more robust (UNDP, 2013). Unfortunately, in Serbia it is not uncommon for court procedures to take several years, which means significant financial and time expenses. An alternative solution for such cases is mediation, which implies the ability to intervene, reach an understanding between the parties, and achieve a fair and just solution in an extrajudicial process. Mediation represents a process in which the mediator, as a neutral party, uses communication and negotiation skills to guide the conversation between the parties,

aiming to solve the conflict or dispute through a mutually acceptable agreement (Nedić & Toskić, 2015).

In several areas, older persons in Serbia experience insufficient access to justice. They include property rights (including the right to inheritance), the rights related to contractually agreed life care, and the procedures related to deprivation of legal capacity and guardianship (Petrušić et al., 2015)

Right to work and access to the labor market

In older age-related to healthcare and social welfare, expenses are a significant factor in financial insecurity for older persons in Serbia (Babović et al., 2018). For some older persons, one of the additional income opportunities is engaging in paid work after retirement. This means that equal opportunities in labor are necessary, free of discrimination, but especially discrimination based on age.

The right to work represents one of the fundamental human rights, and it is defined in many international and national documents. The concept of work is highlighted in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, stating that work represents a prerequisite for human dignity and is one of the central aspects of human rights. Additional international acts that emphasize the meaning of work and labor rights are the International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Declaration on social justice, while the promotion of decent work is one of the critical goals of the International Labor Organization (Bradaš & Reljanović, 2019). The International Labor Organization issued the Declaration on Social Justice in 2008, affirming that decent work should be the primary policy of all nation-states, based on goals such as employment, social justice, social dialogue, and the right to work (International Labor Organization, 2008). In the Republic of Serbia, the right to work is regulated primarily by the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia and the Labor Law. This umbrella document defines the area of labor and the related rights and obligations. The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia guarantees that every person has the right to free choice of work and that all workplaces are available to everyone under equal conditions. However, this is not necessarily true in practice regarding older persons.

It is especially emphasized that women, youth, and persons with disabilities should have safety at work and adequate working conditions (Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, article 60), but no such provision is made for older persons, suggesting that they are not even perceived as labor force and therefore do not need equal access to the labor market. Labor Law regulates the prohibition of discrimination, and Article 18 of the same law prohibits any discrimination of employed persons or persons who are seeking employment when it comes

to gender, years of age, language, nativity, health condition, nationality, religion, marital status, family obligations and other similar properties (Labor law, article 18). Article 20 of the same Law states that discrimination is prohibited concerning:

- conditions of employment and the choice of candidates
- working conditions and labor rights,
- education and improvement,
- career advancement and
- termination of employment contract (Labor Law, article 20).

Right to work represents a human right that allows an individual to work, contribute to the community, and achieve benefits based on his or her work. Precisely because it represents a human right that accentuates labor as something of producing value, it needs to be free of any form of ageism. However, both younger and older workers are often in unfavorable workplace positions, and opportunities to access specialized training and additional professional improvement decline with a worker's age (World Health Organization, 2021). Of course, it is to be remembered that older workers are not a homogenous group regarding functional capacities, abilities and skills, work experience/expertise, and ability to be consulted and to deliberate.

Generally observed, the nature and extent of the participation of older persons in the labor market are influenced by various factors such as the structure of the labor market and changes like the jobs which are dominant in a particular society, accessibility of training or retraining of older workers, skills that older persons have in order to respond to requests of available workplaces, adequacy of pension income, as well as the stereotypes on older workers and older population (Sleep, 2020). Older persons seek jobs and are employed mainly in the same workplaces as other applicants capable of employment. Jobs and job markets targeting specifically older workers are exceptionally rare, unlike in the case of persons with disabilities. The labor market generally treats older persons as being in the same starting position and having equal chances as everybody else when applying for a job.

On the other hand, older workers are often eliminated from the labor market sooner, while their younger colleagues are expected to keep their jobs (International Labor Organization, 2018). Reasons for this approach to employment are various – the degree of the state's development, efficiency of the labor market institutions, educational and health factors, scope of the informal sector, labor rights, and accessibility of social security network (Samorodov, 1999). Besides the already-mentioned issues, digital changes require labor market transformation, demanding adjustment of the older workers to newly created systems. Such rapid changes in the profession and job choice represent a challenge not

only to older workers but also to employers because an older person's experience and acquired knowledge are often ignored, and the emphasis is placed on digital skills by default. Further on, older persons can experience cognitive and physical changes that go along with the aging process. Older workers can be slower in decision-making, which does not mean that those decisions are not better or more accurate. Their knowledge and experience are meaningful resources for conducting business in an organization, and they can have positive working values accumulated over decades (Council of Europe, 2013).

Lack of representation of older workers in the labor market can affect all the spheres of life of older persons, resulting in insufficient self-respect, social isolation, compromised psychological and physical health, disturbed family relationships, financial dependence, elder abuse, and additional or multiplied discriminations of older persons. Thus, providing older persons with decent work is one of the critical aspects of sustainable development. Decent work helps with decreasing inequalities and poverty and empowers vulnerable groups. According to the International Labor Organization, decent work represents a market that enables productive work in conditions of freedom, equality, safety, and human dignity.

Work is considered to be decent when:

- it provides adequate income for the employee
- provides safe job and work safety
- equal opportunities and equal treatment for all
- social protection for the employee and his/her family
- encourages personal development and social participation, and
- freedom of (self)organizing (European Commission).

Access to the labor market for older persons represents a form of access to justice in which older persons have the equal right to work in decent conditions in the same manner as other social categories and thus prevent the negative economic consequences of old age. Achieving this requires a comprehensive approach in which decision-makers, employers, worker representatives, and civil society would recognize the advantages and challenges of having older workers. That includes promoting employment and quality working relationships for both men and women, decreasing incentives for timely retirement, and providing incentives for longer working years. It is also necessary to solve challenges related to workforce demand – it is necessary to motivate older workers to work longer and retired people to be active work-wise, and also to motivate employers to hire older persons (OECD, 2019).

The question of older persons/workers and digital training requires specific attention. Access to courtrooms, tribunals, and related facilities can be severely

reduced with the replacement of physical procedures by online tools due to the lack of access to these technological improvements by older persons or (and) lack of digital skills. The rapid digitalization of judicial and non-judicial services requires a more comprehensive plan to combat the digital exclusion of older persons. (International Labor Organization, 2022)

In Serbia, the retirement age is 65, and according to data from the Labor Force Survey (LFS), the employment rate for the population aged 65 and over is 15%, with notable gender differences: 19.5% for older men and 9.6% for older women. Almost 10% of men and over 3% of women aged 75 and over still work regularly (Babović et al., 2018).

The majority of this active older population is engaged in agriculture (86% of older men and 89.2% of older women. Among those not engaged in agriculture, there are experts (4.3%), technicians and officials (2.9%), workers in trade and services (2.5%), as well as workers in basic, simple occupations (2.0%), artisans (1.9%), mechanical workers (1.0), but also legislators, officials and managers (1.6%). The share of those employed outside agriculture declines with age, so the oldest working older persons are almost entirely engaged in agriculture. Thus, it can be assumed that older persons in Serbia work to satisfy their basic needs, and their access to the labor market must be protected and supported adequately and equitably (Babović et al., 2018).

Research

Access to justice, the right to work, and access to the labor market were topics of consultations conducted in June 2019 within the framework of the “Age Demands Action” (ADA) platform with a view of ensuring the voice of older persons is heard at the eleventh session of the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing in April 2020. Three hundred six older persons (198 women and 108 men) between the ages of 52 and 90 in 24 low-income, middle-income, and high-income countries across the world, including Serbia, participated in the consultations to show obstacles in achieving older persons’ access to justice, work and labor market. As part of this global initiative, the Red Cross of Serbia conducted interviews through three focus groups using a qualitative approach to review and analyze access to justice, the right to work, and access to the labor market among older persons. The objective of this research was to collect personal experiences from persons in retirement about access to justice and the right to work/access to the labor market in order to be able to formulate recommendations for policymakers that will work towards more equitable solutions for older persons. As a qualitative exercise, this study is

just a pilot effort focusing on two crucial elements of older age where the human rights of older persons may be suppressed and more challenging to access due to ageism: access to justice and the right to work/access to the labor market.

Twenty-six participants participated in this qualitative research, aged 65 to 85, all in retirement (25 retired based on age and one retired earlier based on disability). Regarding gender structure, the majority of participants were female – 16 of them, and only one participant used the service of a nursing home accommodation, while others lived in domestic households. The interviews were conducted in three Serbian cities: Kragujevac (11 participants), Velika Plana (10), and Belgrade (5) and the participants were selected from the population of older persons that the Red Cross of Serbia branches in these three communities have contacts with through volunteering. They were selected based on the following criteria: to be over 65, retired, and socially active.

Focus group questions were structured in several segments – problems related to access to justice and the possibility of their solution, right to work, and defining decent work from the perspective of older persons. Interview questions focused on justice issues such as dealing with property, family, money, access to public services, violence, and crime. However, questions about the labor market concern access to it, the perception of older people at work, and the importance of decent work

The participants were interviewed after being informed that they could remain anonymous if preferred and that only their age, gender, and country of residence would be recorded. They were also informed that if answering the questions brings back any painful memories, the Red Cross of Serbia can provide help in finding local support services as well as provide advice about official procedures for making complaints about access to justice and the right to work and access to the labor market, or on how to report incidences of the denial of one's rights in these areas.

Results

The analysis of the responses shows that most participants identified problems in obtaining fair and just solutions in inheritance, disposition of financial means, and public service access. Some participants pointed out that they are in long-term (several years long) battles over inheritance and division of the inherited property after the death of a spouse or problems with the next of kin when it comes to dividing the mutual inheritance. Older persons often give up pursuing fair and just solutions when this pursuit is tied to significant financial

expenditures over a prolonged period. Several respondents repeated that older persons face discriminatory solutions in such cases and that reaching justice at an older age is a lost cause for them. The interviews showed that older women are frequently discriminated against and that they are frequently ignored when it comes to inheriting property. Women are often expected to waive their rights to inherit property willingly, especially in rural areas.

“When my husband died, I waived my inheritance and let my son have both the house and the land it was built on.”

«I agreed to my brother inheriting all our parents' property. Then, when I became a widow, I had no income, so I became dependent on my brother's whims. My husband and I were not officially registered, so I had no right to any of his property.»

“After becoming a widow, the issue of inheritance arose. All the property was listed not to my late husband but to his father – also deceased long ago. Part of it was sold while my father-in-law was still alive, but the formal transfer of property was not completed, so the new owners had to sue the late owner and start probate proceedings that included me and my children. It took a long while to resolve it, and all this time, I had to pay taxes even for the part of the property that they had purchased.”

“I lost my job at 60 because my employer went into administration. We sued for the unpaid salaries, and due to my age, I could not get another job.”

Older persons face a series of challenges in the battle for a fair solution, the most common being financial deficiency, which prevents them from seeking legal aid and reaching justice in court procedures.

“By omission, I paid the same bill twice. As a pensioner, my “sin” is that I want to pay every bill immediately so I don't owe anyone any money. I then addressed the company, and they promised to reduce the next bill for the amount I overpaid, but that did not happen. So they acknowledged my overpayment but never reduced the next payments. Should I talk to the manager or change the provider?”

“I signed a contract on lifetime support with a person that I didn't know well enough. I was deceived and I have lost my apartment. I sent an appeal to Protector of Citizens, but I haven't reached a solution so far. “

Additionally, older persons in all three focus groups displayed mistrust in the responsible public institutions, often feeling that their cases were being “swept under the rug” primarily because of their age. Participants feel that professional services need to pay more attention to standard procedures and treat older persons equally with younger persons. Finally, older people feel that they are socially invisible. As in the previously listed challenges, age discrimination is a primary cause preventing them from having equal access and accomplishing fair and just solutions to problems such as access to services. This makes older persons face exorbitant financial expenses and feel as if they are inferior to the rest of society. These problems discourage older persons from fighting for fair and just solutions.

“I think that my years are the main reason for the unavailability of a solution.”

“Unambiguously, the reason for me being denied admission to the Public Hospital was my age.”

Regarding the questions about the right to work and access to the labor market, participants often stated that they were rejected because of their age or employers' perception of hiring individuals over 65.

“Yes, I tried getting work as a night guard, but I was refused because of my age.”

“When I lost my job, I couldn't find another no matter where I applied because I am over 50.”

The research results obtained via focus groups show that most participants think the older the person is, the fewer the chances of employment.

“Job choice is very limited.”

Testimonies of older people in the focus groups show that there is discrimination against older workers in the labor market because they cannot get a decent job and are asked about their age and not professional skills and experience.

Some stressed that they cannot actively contribute to society and work and have a job after retirement because that would mean taking people's workplaces in their working years.

“After retirement, I started working as a taxi driver because I have a large family in which most of them are unemployed. I work in a taxi service, but my colleagues bully me on a daily basis and pressure me to quit my job because I am taking their daily bread. I complained to my superiors, but they replied that they can't do anything about it.”

As for defining decent work, older persons mainly list adequate working conditions (space, materials), decent salary, appropriate working hours, lack of stress and pressure, and absence of discrimination, manipulation, and exploitation as its defining features. Participants of focus groups feel that decent work would improve their everyday lives because additional income would allow them to afford certain things that are currently out of their reach. Decent work would give them a more relaxed living, reduced stress, and increased satisfaction. Most respondents agree that decent work validates older persons as valuable members of society and increases their independence, dignity, and self-respect. Furthermore, the respondents point out that decent work would provide them with better financial means, thus helping them improve their health and social life – they would visit spas, meet new people, communicate more efficiently, or have more time for their families.

Decent work is defined similarly according to the definition used by the International Labor Organization; it includes a working environment that stimulates productivity and provides fair income, workplace safety, and social protection for all. Defining work like this gives the employees the possibility of personal development and social integration, freedom to express their attitudes and opinions, includes them in decision-making on matters that affect them directly, and supports equality between genders (International Labor Organization, n.d.).

Conclusion

Access to justice is a prerequisite to safety in older age. However, older persons in Serbia find many obstacles in accessing justice, including high financial expenditures, slow, multi-year court processes, and a general sense of being discriminated against based on their age.

While the right to work should be recognized as inalienable, working at one's older age should be a matter of choice and not a necessity. Having opportunities for decent work would ensure many positive effects on the quality of life of older persons, giving them a sense of achievement and usefulness, making them feel included in society and equal to all other generations. Their sense of independence and autonomy in decision-making is reinforced through engagement in the work process, which contributes to a sense of fulfillment in life. Access to work and related income can improve older persons' health through better access to health services.

Challenges to reaching equality in the labor market are mainly connected to normative gaps and current employment policy, where global transition has occurred regarding demand and need for certain professions, knowledge, and skills. However, challenges are also frequently firmly rooted in age discrimination, often

accompanied by other types of discrimination, such as sexism or ableism. One of the issues affecting the potential for establishing an employment relationship in older age is changes in the health of the older persons, which may reduce the choice of jobs they can apply for. Considering all things listed, it is up to the policies related to the labor market to enable equal access to available workplaces for all and to ensure that older persons are entitled to fair and just benefits (physical, financial, interpersonal) and are given opportunities to use their capacities and potential. Ensuring all elements of decent work are available to older persons is the foundation of dignified living in older age. Work is recognized as a value that the community nurtures and makes a concentrated effort to provide conditions for decent work engagement, regardless of age and other individual specificities.

When it comes to access to justice, the speed with which these cases are processed is vital, and the statement attributed to British Prime Minister William Gladstone, “Justice delayed is justice denied,” is undoubtedly relevant in this context. Additionally, prohibitive costs due to lower income, inaccessibility of dispute resolution mechanisms, and lack of digital literacy restrict older persons from accessing relevant legal information.

Older persons have the right to access justice, the right to work, and access to the labor market because it is an integral component of their human rights. However, existing human rights mechanisms must adequately protect and promote older persons’ rights with proactive, equitable measures. This means:

- more precise legislative definitions of older persons and their inalienable rights,
- improved normative framework of legal protection for older persons to effectively protect them from systemic discrimination in accessing justice and the labor market,
- efficient and accessible reporting and redress mechanisms for older persons focused on access to justice and with particular emphasis on labor rights,
- an ongoing program of informing older persons on their rights, including social and economic rights and the legal mechanisms for their protection.

Globally speaking, the New UN Convention on the Rights of Older People is the most effective way to ensure that all people enjoy their human rights in old age and on an equal basis. A convention would promote dignity, equality, autonomy, and self-fulfillment in older age to replace the deeply embedded ageist attitudes and behavior that currently dominate the way societies respond to older age and older people. It would guide policymakers and the functioning mechanisms that protect older persons’ daily access to justice and the labor market.

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