

In a modern world, the process of population ageing is progressing at an unprecedented rate. By 2025, the number of over 60 year-olds will have risen to one billion two hundred million, and in 2050 will have exceeded two billion, thus drawing level with the number of children. Given the pace of the demographic changes taking place, a large proportion of the world's population will find themselves on the margin of society, if only for economic reasons, which in turn will affect the condition of all social groups and state budgets. Society ageing is not just an economic or political problem, though; it is also a human rights issue, for ageing often means exclusion from social life and thus limited enjoyment of personal, political, social, economic, and cultural rights vested in each person. In many cases, the barriers to enjoyment of all human rights follow from stereotypes, biases and categorising older adults as decrepit, ossified in their views and behaviour, and old-fashioned in their morality and skills. This kind of attitude towards old persons, leading to discrimination and exclusion, and preventing them from enjoying all human rights has been named ageism (like racism and sexism).

In addition to ageism, which leads to discrimination, different types of exclusion, another barrier preventing older persons from enjoying all of their human rights is digital exclusion. Older persons, since they were "born too early", were not schooled and trained in the use of new technologies. This, combined with stereotypes, means that their digital exclusion progresses due to commonly held beliefs that it is not worth investing in training of older workers since they take much longer to learn, are unable to keep up with technological advances, and are generally "low-value workers". Spreading awareness in this regard, followed by measures intended to eliminate ageism and digital exclusion, are therefore prerequisites to older persons' social inclusion.

Raising awareness of states, societies and individuals of all ages is also a major challenge for international law, which should respond be able to respond to newly-emerging social phenomena. For this reason, this project is intended to determine whether current international law and EU law offers a model for the prevention of social and digital exclusion of older adults.

A special role in the elaboration and development of such a model is played by non-governmental organisations, which are particularly receptive to human rights violations, abuse, exclusion, and discrimination. hence, the project will set out to identify mechanisms that allow NGOs to operate on the international arena.

As far as the protection of older persons is concerned, non-governmental organisations (especially the largest ones, referred to as umbrella NGOs) are facing an enormous challenge. This is due to the fact that while the United Nations has adopted treaties for the protection of the rights of women, children, migrants, refugees, and persons with disabilities, states, irrespective of the global demographic situation, are not interested in the adoption of a convention on the rights of. They are also reluctant to bind themselves with provisions of agreements adopted in Africa and America. In the light of states' reluctance, NGOs become the engine rooms for the creation of international law in the area of protection of rights of older persons. Given their participation in control procedures, they are also able to hold states accountable for their actions for social and digital exclusion of seniors. This assumption constitutes the project's main research hypothesis, to be verified through the research. The project is intended to establish, through analyses of regulations and doctrine's *acquis*, how international law and EU law fulfil their educational role as regards the combating of ageism and digital exclusion. Furthermore, the project envisages examination of how non-governmental organisations can contribute to raising the international community's awareness as to social and digital inclusion of older persons and encourage states to take affirmative action in this regard.

The subject matter of the project is new as documents devoted to older persons' rights only began to be adopted on the international arena less than 40 years ago, and works on a universal convention are yet to be completed. The first review of good practices, provided for in the resolution of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the rights of older persons, is scheduled to take place in 2019, which means that the project will allow for "live" observation of the functioning of international law instruments. Since the science of international law does not offer publications devoted to awareness-raising role of international law in the context of social and digital inclusion of older persons and the role of non-governmental organisations, articles, monograph and presentations at international conferences, all of which are planned outcomes of this project, will help to fill this gap.