

UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing
Rome
15-17 June 2022

María Rodríguez Alcázar – European Youth Forum

Introductory words

- Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak at today's panel. It's a **privilege** to be here today as part of the **UNECE** event, which the European Youth Forum also had the pleasure of speaking at 5 years ago.
- We are also **delighted** to be sharing the stage with our colleagues at **AGE Platform**, who we have had the pleasure of collaborating with to advocate for a **life course approach** to **tackling ageism** and **promoting intergenerational solidarity**.
- My name is María Rodríguez Alcázar and I am a Board Member of the European Youth Forum and **oversee the work on** young people's social and economic inclusion. The European Youth Forum is the **largest network** representing over 100 youth organisations, which brings together the **voices of tens of millions** of young people from all over Europe. Our membership represents young people from all walks of life, who face complex and intersecting issues on a day-to-day basis
- If you still wonder why there is a youth representative in this Conference, the reply is very simple. We share a **common goal**, a **common challenge**: **addressing ageism**.

Age-based discrimination

- As part of this year's **European Year of Youth**, and having the opportunity to speak here today, I would like to **draw on the parallel experiences** that young and older people face, as a result of experiencing discrimination on the basis of their **age**.
- What I want to highlight is that this **discrimination** very **clearly** occurs at **all aspects of life**. I'd like to **call upon decision-makers** - including those present today - to **take on** a more **holistic, coordinated approach when it comes to addressing ageism**, when it comes to addressing these common experiences. In our view, all policies and laws must work for all people, of all ages.

Impacts of COVID-19

- The **last few years** have no doubt been **difficult**. The COVID-19 pandemic **highlighted** many areas of **existing** - and **worsening** - examples of **systemic**

inequality.

- In our 2021 report 'Beyond Lockdown: the 'pandemic scar' on young people', we surveyed 4,450 young people and heard:
 - that almost **12%** of young workers **stopped working**,
 - almost **75%** reported **learning less** during the pandemic,
 - while nearly **two-thirds** of young people were **potentially affected** by **mental health** and **wellbeing issues** (e.g. depression, anxiety).
 - These impacts were much stronger for **marginalised young people**.

Quick summary of recommendations

- I have no doubt that many of these issues also **resonate** with those you are working with when it comes to **older people's experiences** with regards to education, employment and mental health. This is why we are advocating for 3 things to ensure that no young or older person is left out:
 1. Taking a **rights-based approach** to all policies to ensure this life course approach;
 2. For decision-makers to provide sufficient **spaces** for **meaningful youth participation** and **intergenerational dialogue**, and
 3. For policy-makers to introduce a **youth impact assessment (EU Youth Test)** to all policies so that young people are **accounted for** and engaged in all policy-making processes.
- These recommendations support **our vision** in which **all people**, including youth, are recognised as **active rights-holders**, and can **fully enjoy** and **exercise** their rights and freedoms.
- I will leave my intervention for now here, and look forward to continuing the discussion here today with the other panellists.