

Ms. Mary Butler, Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People of Ireland

Second Ministerial Roundtable

Mainstreaming ageing to advance a society for all ages

Excellencies, distinguished guests, dear colleagues,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Government of Ireland as Minister for Mental Health and Older People.

For the last two decades Ireland has been integrating ageing issues into all relevant policy fields at national and local level. Irelands current Programme for Government has a vision of creating an Age Friendly Ireland. Including older persons in the core framework for policy and service delivery across Government ensures that ageing is not just a health issue but requires a whole of Government approach to address a range of social, economic and environmental factors that affect the lives of our ageing citizens.

All across Ireland there is very tangible evidence showing how our society is preparing for population ageing. We can see age friendly car parking spaces being installed, age friendly towns, hospital, and primary care centres, and a wide range of initiatives that enables older people to continue to contribute to the social, economic, and sustainable development of their societies. These are the direct results of policy integration and innovative partnerships between Government Departments, local authorities, and associated organisations such as Age Friendly Ireland.

Our efforts have been internationally recognised. In 2019, Ireland was the first country in the world to be fully affiliated to the World Health Organisations Global Age Friendly Programme. We take our position and responsibility in this regard very seriously.

In order to deliver we must first understand the diverse and evolving needs of all older people in the community, whether rural or urban, younger or older, diverse ethnic groups, members of the Traveller community, older people with disabilities, LGBTI+ older people and other minorities. We are constantly engaging with our citizens to ensure we are meeting the needs of our older citizens. Over the last 10 years over 20,000 older people have participated in consultations across Ireland through – town hall meetings, Older Peoples Councils, round table discussions, focus groups, workshops, and annual general meetings.

Twenty years onwards from the adoption of Madrid Implementation Plan of Action on Ageing we must take to a more holistic, life-course, and equitable approach to mainstream ageing, we must listen to our citizens to establish an approach that integrates a dual response to both population and individual ageing. Only then will we truly fulfil the commitments we adopted twenty years ago.

Thank you.