

Addressing Old-Age Loneliness and Social Isolation: from Evidence to Action

Policy Seminar

*European Policy Seminar of COST Action Reducing Old-Age Exclusion in Europe:
Collaborations in Research and Policy – ROSEnet (CA 15122)
Translation in English and French*

*Kartuizercenter; Rue des Chartreux 70; 1000 Brussels; Tel: +32 2 500 28 11
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Numerous risk factors are known to increase someone's vulnerability to, and likelihood of experiencing, loneliness and social isolation in old age. Understood as forms of exclusion from social relations, common risk factors include age, gender, low socio-economic status, ethnicity, and sexuality. Household circumstances and marital status also play a key role, with solo living and widowhood associated with heightened risks of isolation and loneliness. Recent research links such forms of exclusion to poor physical and mental health, reduced mobility, informal caring roles, low financial resources, and residence in particular types of (urban and rural) community. By considering these factors, and the interaction between them, older people and their organisations, researchers, practitioners, and policy makers can build a better understanding of who might experience loneliness or be socially isolated and, therefore, be likely to benefit from support.

Considering the complexity of the causes of loneliness and isolation in later life and ongoing demographic ageing, there is urgency to further raise public awareness about the phenomenon and the opportunities for cooperation between all relevant actors to effectively prevent loneliness and social isolation in old age. Gathering speakers from policy, the scientific community and civil society, the seminar will address such topics as the state of the art of research on loneliness, local perspectives, the role of technology to reduce social exclusion and loneliness, and the responsibilities of different levels of policy making to address the phenomenon.

Programme

8:30 – 9:00

Registration, Coffee and Networking

9:00 – 9:15

Welcome and setting the scene

Prof Thomas Scharf, Newcastle University Institute for Ageing,
Newcastle University, ROSEnet Action Vice Chair

9:15 – 10:30

Key challenges – stakeholder perspectives

1. *State-of-the-art in research on loneliness and social isolation*
Prof Marja Aartsen, Norwegian Social Research, Oslo
Metropolitan University
2. *Grass-roots engagement*
Jean-Pierre Bultez, les petits frères des Pauvres, France, AGE
representative in ROSEnet Older Adults Reference Group
3. *Can technology help combat loneliness and social isolation?*
Prof Niall Hayes, Project Coordinator of Mobile Age Project
<https://www.mobile-age.eu/>

Q&A – 20 min

10:30-10:50

Coffee break

10:50-12:20

Addressing challenges in policy making and practice

Moderator: Maciej Kucharczyk, Policy Director, AGE Platform
Europe

1. *Local perspective - Fighting loneliness and social isolation in Flanders, Belgium*
Iris de Mol, Senior Advisor on older people, Association of
Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG)
2. *National approach – UK Campaign to End Loneliness*,
Robin Hewings, Policy and Research Director, Campaign to
End Loneliness
<https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/>

3. *What can the EU do to end loneliness and social isolation?*
Jiří Švarc, European Commission, Head of Unit, Social
Investment Strategy, DG Employment, Social Affairs and
Inclusion

Q&A – 20 min

12:20-12:40

Concluding remarks on the way forward

Prof Thomas Scharf, Newcastle University Institute for Ageing,
Newcastle University, ROSEnet Action Vice Chair

Anne-Sophie Parent, Secretary General, AGE Platform Europe

12:40 – 13:30

Lunch and networking

End of meeting