

FORWARD Conference: Fostering Knowledge and Action for the Rights of Older Women

An international conference on the rights of older women took place on 28th November 2025 at the Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Barcelona, Spain. Just days after the international Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women we raised voices for the rights of older women.

The FORWARD conference was dedicated to the memory of Elizabeth Sclater (1946–2024), a key figure in advancing the rights of older women, both through her professional practice as a social worker and through her advocacy for the human rights of older women at the European and international levels. With a professional career spanning over four decades — including her role as Equal Opportunities Officer for older people in the London Borough of Lewisham — she was a co-founder of OWN Europe, promoted pioneering work on gender and age, and played a decisive role in monitoring CEDAW and advancing the agenda for a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons, among other contributions. In 2019 she was awarded the Officers of the British Empire (OBE) for her services to older women. Her legacy continues to inspire the international movement for the rights of older women.

[Agenda](#)

The event was opened by Pedro Cano, Director General for Older Persons at the Government of Catalonia. Dr. Claudia Mahler, United Nations Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, delivered the opening keynote speech. Members of OWN Europe were actively involved in the preparation of the conference and the policy documents as well as in the live event. Anne-Sophie Parent, Chair OWN Europe and Bridget Penhale (University of East Anglia / INPEA / OWN Europe) spoke on the first panel on Human Rights and Public Responsibility in Addressing Gender-Based Violence Against Older Women, moderated by Neus Pociello Cayuela from Aroa Foundation.

The second panel was dedicated to Overlooked gender based violence (GBV) and Emerging Knowledge: Feminist Contributions to Uphold Older Women's Rights Sharing data and knowledge produced within academia and through the situated knowledge of feminist organisations. Maria Petkova, secretary general of OWN Europe, presented some research on professional practices from a couple of EU projects involving many participants from various countries.

Janet Stevenson, member of the OWN- EU LinkedIn group spoke about the role of justice systems in ensuring protection and access to rights.in the last panel on Good Practices and Transformative Strategies.

A Policy Brief “A life free from gender-based violence at all ages: Policy recommendations to uphold the rights of older women” with recommendations and advocacy strategies led by civil society, together with a roadmap for advancing the rights of older women in the current context is being developed and will be published in early spring 2026. The policy brief is also dedicated to the memory of Elizabeth Sclater, co-founder of OWN Europe.

For more information, contact Maria Petkova, OWN Europe Secretary General at: info@owneurope.org