



The State Comptroller
and Ombudsman of Israel



State of Israel

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Challenges and Goals in Providing Services for Older Persons -
Lessons Learned from the Investigation of Complaints

The Ombudsman



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This special report of the Ombudsman is presented to the Knesset (Israeli parliament) under the provisions of Section 46(b) of State Comptroller Law, 5718-1958 [Consolidated Version]. The report details challenges and goals in the provision of services for older persons as disclosed by the complaints filed by older persons.



"Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days" (Job, 12:12)

"He who learns from the old, to what is he compared?"

To one who eats ripe grapes and drinks aged wine" (Ethics of the Fathers, 4:20)

Opening Remarks of the Ombudsman and the Head of the Office of the Ombudsman

This special report of the Ombudsman is presented to the Knesset (Israeli parliament) under Section 46(b) of State Comptroller Law 5718-1958 [Consolidated Version].

According to the vision of the Office of the State Comptroller and Ombudsman, the Office of the Ombudsman must be an objective, professional and accessible body, investigating complaints received from any person in order to ensure the upholding of their rights and the promotion of effective and just public service for all sectors of society. The special report placed before you illustrates in the best way possible how the Office of the State Comptroller fulfills this vision in practice as regards investigating the complaints of older persons and making its services accessible to this community.

The report before you shines a spotlight on the ageing of the population throughout the world and in Israel, and presents challenges and goals pertaining to the provision of services for older persons, as disclosed through the investigation of complaints filed with the Office of the Ombudsman by this community. The aim of the report is to allow early and optimal preparedness for coping with this phenomenon and rendering appropriate public services.

We are living in an age in which public bodies and others are making increasing use of digital means of communication. However, the relative low digital literacy of older persons makes it difficult for them to use digital means for receiving service from public bodies. Indeed, the report laid before you shows that the trend in digitalization of public services causes

problems for the community of older persons, and that although the digital literacy of older persons has been increasing in recent years, it is still much lower than that of other sectors of the population. In this regard, it should be pointed out that during the Covid-19 pandemic, when digital means became the primary, and often the only, means of communication between the public and public bodies, there was an increase in the use of representatives to file complaints on behalf of older persons aged 70 and above with the Office of the Ombudsman.

This special report is innovative from a number of aspects. Most importantly, it examines the issue of public services given to older persons from the perspective of this community of service users, and innovative tools were used in the writing of the report. The report is based on the data gathered by the Office of the Ombudsman and its statistical analyses relating to the characteristics of older complainants; on an analysis of the discourse of older persons and their relatives on the social networks; on an analysis of the data included in the responses of 55 ombudsman institutions across the globe to a questionnaire that the Office sent out about the investigation of complaints of older persons; and on research addressing the rights of older persons and the right to access the administration.

The report seeks to bring the issue of public services received by older persons both to the attention of public bodies in charge of providing services for this community and to the attention of persons dealing with the investigation of complaints in the public bodies. They will all find in the report tools and insights that will serve them in the provision of services for older persons and in the continuation of their activity in this field.

All public servants rendering services for older persons must remember that they are dealing with human beings and must take into account their special circumstances and needs, regardless of their

age. Older persons receiving the service are entitled to respect, without a prejudicial, stereotyping or patronizing approach to their advanced age. Service providers must listen to older persons, including to their expressed needs and preferences. Furthermore, when the service is being given to older persons, public servants must ensure that the needs of the older persons, relating to their age, are being addressed. All these require the service provider to be flexible and sensitive, to ensure respectful communication, to simplify the bureaucratic processes, to exercise broad discretion and to facilitate as far as possible the realization of rights by persons who encounter difficulties in doing so.

The Office of the Ombudsman will continue to lend a listening ear to communities deserving special attention and to focus on broadening its accessibility and availability to these communities, as to the population at large. We invite the public in general, and older persons in particular, to continue receiving assistance from the Office whenever they encounter difficulties in exercising their rights or receiving a service from a public body.



Matanyahu Englman
State Comptroller
and Ombudsman



Dr. Esther Ben-Haim, Adv.
Head of the Office
of the Ombudsman

Table of Contents

- 4 Opening Remarks of the Ombudsman and the Head of the Office of the Ombudsman**
- 8 Preface**
- 13 Characteristics of Older Complainants - Statistical Data**
- 39 Service Provided for Older Persons by Government Authorities and Public Administration**
 - 40 Public service and older persons
 - 42 Bureaucracy and delays in the provision of service
 - 57 Impact of digitalization of public service on older persons
 - 70 Derogatory, insensitive or unavailable treatment
 - 79 Summary
- 81 Analysis of the Discourse of Older Persons on Social Networks Regarding the Accessibility of Public Service**
- 99 Investigation of Complaints of Older Persons by Ombudsman Institutions Around the World**
- 113 Tailoring Public Service to Older Persons**
 - 119 Importance of gathering data and their translation into action-guiding information
 - 125 Service tailored to older persons
 - 134 Outreach and awareness-raising activities aimed at older persons
 - 141 Making public service and ways of filing complaints accessible to older persons
- 148 Glossary**
- 150 Addresses of the Office of the Ombudsman's Bureaus**