

Aging and Communication Studies

ECREA Temporary Working Group Proposal

Mission statement

How do communication scholars imagine later life and analyze this increasingly relevant life stage? How do communication studies consider, represent, think and analyze older people and their diversity?

The intersection of aging studies and communication studies has been an overlooked area. Older people tend to be located on the periphery of communication studies. In fact, old age remains on the outskirts of the hyper-digitized society due to a lack of representation, usually, an unwanted situation that affects significant segments of the older population –from those aged 65 to those aged over 100 years old.

The TWG *Aging and Communication Studies* aims to foster the field of aging and communication studies in Europe by creating a strong network of multidisciplinary scholars. It approaches later life by considering the diversity of this life stage that is currently being redefined in cultural, social and economic terms. Analyzing and theorizing communication and digitization in relation to later life is essential. Among others, aging studies should be brought into the analysis of the networked society and the platform society to explain all its dimensions properly.

The TWG is also interested in different forms of ageism and the explanation of their roots. For instance, ageism in digital platforms and artificial intelligence, possible strands of ageism in the data that analyses the digital life of older people, the (visual) ageism digital and traditional media produce and reproduce, or the (self-)stereotyping around the digital practices at different life stages.

The foundational framework considers older individuals as citizens, not as ex-citizens who have lost their voice and agency (for instance, due to retirement), whatever their age, class, language, gender, sexual orientation or (dis-)ability. We need multi-dimensional, comprehensive changes to the power relations that position older people

The TWG *Aging and Communication Studies* encourages and integrates interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary analyses of communication practices in later life –being these digitally mediated or not. This presents new opportunities for research and education and the chance to collaborate with other ECREA sections as, given the current demographic transition, the older population is increasing its demographic and cultural relevance.

The TWG has the vision of becoming a central community of practice in the European context, fostering solid empirical evidence, theories and reflections that help empower older adults within hyper-digitized societies. The TWG will establish a fruitful dialogue with diverse disciplines and fields of study, including, among others, communication, internet studies, media, cultural studies, social gerontology, science and technology studies, and sociology, as well as different methodological approaches, such as quantitative, qualitative, empirical, and theoretical. Finally, the findings of the TWG members will be communicated to the international academic community and the general public via workshops/conferences and publications, as the section strongly supports the transfer of findings to society at large.

The themes or keywords that identify the TWG *Aging and Communication Studies* include – but are far from restricted to – the following (alphabetical order):

- ageism and its forms
- aging and gender studies
- aging and intersectionality
- aging and LGBTQIA+ studies
- algorithmic processes
- artificial intelligence,
- cultural studies
- critical communication studies
- critical gerontology
- datafication
- digital communication
- digital cultures
- digital divides
- digital literacy
- everyday life studies
- gaming
- identity
- intergenerational communication in organizations
- interpersonal and intergenerational communication
- memory studies
- political action and political communication
- old age as a (social and economic) periphery
- representations of aging and later life (referred to media, advertising, digital platforms, data, technological design,...)
- self-representations of older people (off- and online)
- social change
- social media cultures and usage practices
- stereotypes and self-stereotypes
- third age and fourth age (and the diversity of later life)