

Mayte Sancho, patron of Matia, chosen among the 50 world leaders of the #HealthyAgeing50 initiative of the United Nations and WHO

- **Mayte Sancho was one of the 50 people chosen from more than 500 applications submitted.**
- **The WHO Director-General and other heads of organisations such as the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) recognised the leadership role played by the selected leaders in the field of improving the health and well-being of older people.**

As the United Nations points out, the world's population currently lives an average of 20 years longer than 50 years ago. In Spain, a little over a decade. We are living longer, but is society prepared to respond to the challenges that accompany this new longevity?

In response to this challenge and in line with the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the UN General Assembly declared the period 2021-2030 as the United Nations Decade for Healthy Ageing to advance the following goals:

1. Changing the way we think, feel and act about age and ageing.
2. Ensure that communities nurture the capabilities of older people.
3. Provide integrated, people-centred care and primary health services that are responsive to the needs of older people.
4. Provide access to long-term care for older people in need.

With this premise, last June saw the launch of "Healthy Ageing 50", an initiative that sought to identify 50 leaders among people who are working in the field of healthy ageing. The #HealthyAgeing50 wanted to recognise the contributions and work of those selected as inspiring examples of what people are already doing to make the goals of the United Nations Decade for Healthy Ageing a reality.

The list of selected individuals was announced yesterday. Among them, Maye Sancho Castiello, researcher, psychologist-gerontologist, communicator and activist in the field of ageing, with an extensive professional career, inextricably linked to the generation of knowledge in this field.

In his announcement, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, conveyed the following message: "I am pleased to recognise these world-changing leaders who, often with limited resources, show what can be done - and how - to improve the health and well-being of older people".

After a period at the Imserso in which she was able to move from direct care to training and research work, and in which she set up the Observatory on Ageing and Dependency, Mayte

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has returned to Matia where, as scientific director of the Matia Institute, she will play a key role in promoting the transformation of the long-term care model in residences and homes, with projects such as Etxean Ondo and, more recently, Etxean Bizi.

Mayte is currently a member of the Board of Matia Foundation and of the NGO Grandes Amigos, and an independent expert, always based on her vocation and interest in generating advances in areas such as age discrimination and, especially, the transformation of the long-term care model. Activities in which she collaborates with various public administrations and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Always close to the world of research and innovation despite her consolidated list of achievements in healthy ageing at national and regional level, she is undoubtedly one of the most recognised figures in the field of gerontology in Spain.

Among those selected are the well-known American activist and writer, Ashton Applewhite; the United Nations independent expert on the rights of older people, Claudia Mahler, and the head of the Greater Manchester Centre for Ageing, Paul McGarry, among others.

About the initiative:

Healthy Ageing 50 is an initiative of the United Nations Decade for Healthy Ageing supported by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the World Economic Forum (the Forum) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

About Matia:

A non-profit organisation of general interest located in the province of Gipuzkoa that was founded on 16 December 1889, thanks to the legacy of the Basque shipowner Jose Matia Calvo. The founding purpose is: "to accompany people in their ageing process, generating knowledge and personalised services to improve their wellbeing, generating knowledge and personalised services to promote their autonomy and dignity in a sustainable manner". In 2021, the Foundation achieved a turnover of 52 million euros, employed 1,498 people to accompany 27,184 people distributed in 18 work centres and was supported by 646 volunteers, coming from 123 different organisations. The main source of funding comes from the agreement of activities with public administrations, approximately 85%.

It is worth highlighting the healthcare activity through the Ricardo Bermingham Hospital. This is a medium-stay, geriatric centre with 123 beds, specialising in psychogeriatrics, orthogeriatrics, palliative care and convalescence aimed at stabilising acute episodes in elderly or very elderly people in situations of great fragility and dependence. The outpatient clinics specialise in elderly people with cognitive impairment. It also has outpatient clinics and seven outpatient rehabilitation gyms in different towns in Gipuzkoa, with a specific device for neurological rehabilitation.

The Matia Foundation manages the home care service in different municipalities in Gipuzkoa and has a personal assistance service, eight residential centres, nine day centres and flats for the elderly under an agreement with the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa. All of this ensures coverage and continuity of care after discharge from hospital, referring those people who need it to its social centres or providing care at home; and when this is not the case, it works in coordination with other agents.

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The Foundation, within its organisational perimeter, has a gerontological research centre, the Matia Institute, created in 2002 and which in 2021 had a turnover of 1.2 million euros. Its activity is focused on contributing, through the generation of knowledge, to the advancement of the Foundation's mission in the environment. To this end, it works collaboratively both with the Foundation itself and with public administrations and is recognised in the Basque Science and Technology Network within the health subsystem.