



UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC COMMISSION  
FOR EUROPE

# WEEKLY

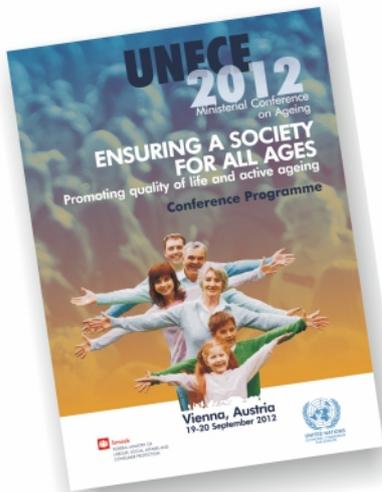
## UNECE

24 - 28 September 2012

496

Ageing

### 18-20 September 2012: UNECE Ministerial Conference in Vienna, Austria



With more than 500 participants, the UNECE Ministerial Conference under the motto **"Ensuring a society for all ages, promoting quality of life and active ageing"**, came to a close on 20 September 2012 in Vienna, Austria, after three intense days of discussion.

High participation turnout showed the importance attributed to population ageing in the region. This was further highlighted by the presence of the Federal President of the Republic of Austria, Heinz Fischer, who addressed the Ministerial segment of the Conference on 20 September. In his remarks, he emphasized that ageing is an "important challenge to health systems" and societies in general, and called for ambitious policy initiatives to ensure the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA).



From left to right - Rudolf Hundstorfer, Federal Minister for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Austria, Heinz Fischer, Federal President of the Republic of Austria, and Sven Alkalaj, UNECE Executive Secretary.



#### Active Ageing

"Active ageing is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age" (WHO 2002).

Of 56 UNECE member States, 50 had sent delegations – 30 of them headed at the level of minister or vice-minister. The Ministerial Declaration that was adopted unanimously at the end of the Conference launched the third cycle of implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in the UNECE Region (2012-2017). The Madrid

International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted in 2002 at the Second World Assembly on Ageing and later translated into a Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS), provides the policy framework for the UNECE region to respond to challenges and opportunities posed by population ageing. The Conference marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first World Assembly on Ageing, which also took place in Vienna in 1982.

#### Population ageing in the UNECE region

Over the last ten years, the ageing of population was a dominant feature across all UNECE countries. And in the coming decades, the extent and pace of ageing in the region is not expected to abate: people aged 65 years and above are set to account for more than a fifth of total population by 2030, while those aged 80 years and above will make up more than 5 per cent. The median age of the region's population will move up from 37.6 years presently to 41.8 years by 2030.

Following a first review in 2007, the implementation of the 2002 MIPAA/RIS framework was evaluated for a second time in 2012. Member States were required to submit comprehensive progress reports ahead of the Ministerial Conference. Based on the national reports, a regional synthesis report was prepared, providing important background information for the discussions at the Ministerial Conference. UNECE member States report major achievements in the area of adjusting social protection systems, in ensuring health and well-being and maintaining independent living. Interestingly, these are also among the top areas where major challenges are identified. In addition, important achievements are reported in mainstreaming ageing while challenges remain in adjusting labour markets.



Lidia Bratanova, Director, UNECE Statistical Division.



Vitalia Gaucaite Wittich, Chief, UNECE Population Unit, and Conference secretary.

## The Ministerial Declaration

The Ministerial Declaration outlines priority directions for the third cycle of implementation of MIPAA/RIS in the UNECE region which begins as the Conference ends. Looking at the challenges ahead, ministers and country delegations declared their determination to reach four priority policy goals by 2017, namely:

- encouraging longer working lives
- promoting participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older persons
- promoting and safeguarding dignity, health and independence in older age
- maintaining and enhancing intergenerational solidarity.

In his remarks throughout the Ministerial Conference, UNECE Executive Secretary Sven Alkalaj stressed the historic responsibility of member States in reshaping societies in response to population ageing. "Doing our utmost to implement the commitments of the Declaration", he said "is in our own good interest and in that of our children".

At the Conference, the Executive Secretary held a series of meetings with Alice Wong, Minister of State (Seniors), Canada, Alexey Vovchenko, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Russian Federation, Bekmyrat Shamyradov, Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Population of Turkmenistan, and Marianna Shchotkina, Minister of Labour and Social Protection, Belarus, to discuss further strengthening bilateral cooperation on ageing.

## NGO Forum and Research Forum

Throughout the Conference, scientists and NGO representatives were given prominent roles as discussants, moderators and rapporteurs. Their importance is also acknowledged in the Ministerial Declaration. In addition, on the first day of the Conference, on 18 September, around 120 NGO representatives and 60 scientists gathered in two parallel Forums to discuss MIPAA/RIS from their perspectives. Both the NGO Forum and the Research Forum concluded in a Declaration that informed discussions during the Ministerial Segment of the Conference (20 September 2012). In their political declaration, NGOs called upon governments to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of MIPAA/RIS implementation and to fully recognize the role of civil society and older persons themselves in achieving the commitments included in the present Ministerial Conference and in the original MIPAA agreement. The Research Forum focused on the importance of evidence-informed policy-making in implementing MIPAA/RIS, suggesting the establishment of a Research Application and Dissemination Platform on Ageing (REAP-AGE) to enhance scientific exchange across the region.

## Poster Exhibition shows good practice examples from across the UNECE region

Johann Wolfgang Goethe once said that even the stones that have been placed in one's path can be made into something beautiful. The good practice exhibition illustrated how from the challenges posed by population ageing, indeed something beautiful can be built. Showcasing good practice examples in implementing the Madrid framework in the region during the second cycle of implementation (2007-2012), the poster collection contributed to policy discussions and inspired mutual learning. The posters provided examples from countries as diverse as the United States, Austria, the Czech Republic, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Slovenia, Ukraine or Norway. Projects were on age-friendly workplaces, self-help groups of older persons, education and learning, sports, dancing or gardening. Both governments and NGOs were invited to submit poster proposals and a committee of reviewers was in charge of providing comments. □



The UNECE team with colleagues from the Federal Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection of Austria.

Conference website: [http://www.unece.org/pau/ageing/ministerial\\_conference\\_2012.html](http://www.unece.org/pau/ageing/ministerial_conference_2012.html).



Family photo with Ministers and Heads of delegation.



Press Conference with (from left to right) Sven Alkalaj, Rudolf Hundstorfer and László Andor, EU-Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.



Joint opening of the NGO and research forum.

