

**UNECE****United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

**Bundesministerium
für Familie, Senioren, Frauen
und Jugend**Press Release ECE/GEN/02/21
Geneva, 3 September 2002

Ageing: a crucial topic for our times

Ministerial Conference on Ageing

(Berlin, Germany, 11-13 September 2002)

If current demographic trends continue, countries in Europe and North America will experience unprecedented changes in the age distribution of their populations. The proportion of younger generations will dwindle, while that of older persons will increase significantly. By 2050, every third person in Europe and North America is expected to be over the age of 60. Old age policies designed for a demographically younger society in mind must now be re-evaluated and appropriately adjusted. International, national and local communities must begin to adapt and/or design their infrastructures, policies, plans and resources to reflect the changed demographic realities.

In order to address these complex issues, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is organizing in cooperation with the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany a regional Ministerial Conference on Ageing, which will be held in Berlin from 11 to 13 September 2002. The Conference will consider and adopt a Ministerial Declaration and a Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002, as adopted by the Second World Assembly on Ageing (Madrid, April 2002).

Ageing is one of the salient economic, social and demographic phenomena of our times. As an issue, it cannot be separated from social integration, gender advancement, economic stability or issues of poverty. It has become connected to many global agendas and increasingly plays a prominent role in the way society interacts with economic and social welfare institutions, family and community life and the roles of women.

The governments of the UNECE member States are aware of their responsibilities with regard to the formulation and implementation of new policies to address ageing, and are striving to combine their efforts in seeking solutions. This cooperation was demonstrated successfully during the preparations for the Ministerial Conference, and the Regional Implementation Strategy was developed with the cooperation of actors from international bodies and in particular from non-governmental organizations.

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The attendance at the conference reflects the involvement of all actors. In addition to delegations from UNECE member States, numerous international organizations and NGOs will be participating as observers and contributing their viewpoints to the deliberations.

It is the common aim of the member States and the UNECE to create the framework conditions required to bring about future-oriented policies for all ages.

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Provisional Agenda

Wednesday, 11 September

- Official Opening of the Conference by Minister Dr. Christine Bergmann and Mrs. Brigita Schmögnerová, Executive Secretary of the UNECE
- First Panel Discussion: Demographic change and the labour market: What are the challenges we are facing?

Thursday, 12 September

- Second Panel Discussion: Demographic change - opportunities and limitations of intergenerational solidarity
- General debate: statements by delegations

Friday, 13 September

- Presentation of NGO Declaration
- Conference closes with adoption of a Regional Implementation Strategy and Political Declaration by the member States