

## **Panel C: Towards a balanced care strategy**

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Ladies and gentlemen, let me thank you for the opportunity to be part of this panel, which addresses such an important, interesting and broad issue.

When discussing the issue of care for older people in the context of demographic ageing I would like to emphasize that demographic ageing is a consequence of social development and as such it is positive and should be seen as such. This perspective should be promoted when considering issues related to care.

We should be aware that there is no simple relationship between rising longevity and public health and between rising longevity and expenses on health and long- term care.

Effective health promotion, disease control and prevention, economical use of financial resources, increase in economic growth and employment level are decisive factors contributing to improvement of public health and to manageable development of quality health services. We must not also forget that a need of care and the way we provide it very much depends on supportive and enabling environment, and other important factors such as availability of public services, housing, composition of households or migration.

To address challenges of demographic ageing we need to adjust our health care systems to changing health needs of people, to focus on frailty and support of independence and active life of older persons. As the Regional Implementation Strategy of MIPAA states, it is necessary to ensure that increased longevity is accompanied by the highest attainable standard of health, which is generally understood not merely as the absence of disease or infirmity, but as the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. I would like to stress mental and social aspect of well-being here.

I see the following challenges and priorities in the area of care:

- Development of human resources in the area of care and especially development of education and training to ensure that health care systems are able to meet the needs of ageing population

- Adaptation of health care systems to meet the needs of frail older people and people with dementia, whose numbers are going to rise in future
- Transformation of residential facilities into community-oriented facilities, providing support to older people and families, and opportunities for educational, social, cultural and spiritual activities
- Prevention of abuse of human rights of people dependent on care
- Development of comprehensive support for informal carers

An innovation plays important role in development of care systems. For example, modern technology can significantly contribute to independence and quality of life in old age and provides great opportunity. We should look for balance between what is available in health care and how it can improve the quality of life.

We live longer, but only minority of older people need extensive long-term care. With increasing life expectancy the need for extensive care is moving to later stages and years of life. Big challenge thus is rather to create conditions for participation of rising numbers of very old people in communities and society. All people need social contacts, opportunity for using their potential and experience for the benefit of other people and their own.

In most countries families still play very important role in providing care. When family members take responsibility of caring for older persons for extended period of time, it is important that society provides them with support and social protection. Social protection should be available whether you decide to continue to work or to interrupt work and should include the provision of respite social services, protection of income of caring persons, carers-friendly employment policies including flexible working hours and carers leave or providing support to carers who are returning at the labour market. Social protection policies should also reflect changes in family and working life and respect tradition, culture, and values of the society. As majority of informal carers in most UNECE countries are women, such measures should be gender sensitive and should promote equality between men and women.

Finally I would like to stress that care policies should support families, strengthen intergenerational relationships and promote social cohesion and development. Civil society and NGO organizations could play very important role in increasing public awareness of importance of intergenerational solidarity and collaboration for the benefit of all.