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WORKING GROUP ON AGEING

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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

Note by the secretariat

Summary

At its first meeting (1–2 December 2008), the Working Group on Ageing adopted its programme of work for 2009–2010 (ECE/WG.1/2008/3). This note describes the implementation of this programme in 2009, covering the four main activities: (a) preparation of policy briefs with good practice examples; (b) monitoring; (c) capacity development; and (d) analysis of intergenerational relationships. The note is expected to assist the Working Group in taking decisions on its activities in 2010.

I. POLICY BRIEFS WITH GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

1. To enhance exchange of good policy practice among member States, the Working Group is issuing a series of policy briefs that provide information on the state of the art of policy discourse. The policy briefs demonstrate successful examples of policies and programmes implementing the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA/RIS). The secretariat is compiling the policy briefs based on contributions from member States.
2. In 2009, policy briefs have been prepared on the following topics:
 - (a) Mainstreaming ageing;
 - (b) Gender equality, work and old age;
 - (c) Older persons as consumers;
 - (d) Integration and participation of older persons in society.
3. In January and June 2009, the secretariat requested Working Group members to submit good practice examples on the topics of the policy briefs under preparation. In parallel, relevant material from international and national sources and reports was collected and systematized. The good practice examples are now being organized in a database that currently includes 86 entries, among them 51 examples submitted by Working Group members in response to the two requests. The secretariat has endeavoured to include in the briefs examples of successful implementation of policies and programmes representing the variety of different policy contexts of the region.
4. Drafts of the above mentioned four policy briefs were presented and discussed at the first meeting of the Working Group's Bureau (Bratislava, 11–12 May 2009). Bureau members provided inputs and comments, including a request to place a checklist of key issues at the end of each policy brief. The policy briefs were finalized based on these inputs and comments.
5. Following discussions on the topics of further policy briefs at the first meeting of the Working Group and its Bureau and based on the inputs submitted by Working Group members, the secretariat has prepared advance drafts of policy briefs on (a) lifelong learning and (b) health promotion and prevention of diseases and accidents. These will be presented to the Working Group for discussion.
6. The finalized policy briefs will be made available electronically through the UNECE website. It is proposed that a collection of policy briefs will be published in a single volume in 2010.

II. MONITORING

A. Indicators

7. To monitor implementation of MIPAA/RIS, the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research (European Centre Vienna, ECV) has been developing indicators and collecting corresponding data. In 2009–2010, this work is focusing on the gender aspect of mainstreaming ageing indicators and on long-term care indicators.
8. The gender-specific mainstreaming ageing indicators will address the following three key issues: (a) the differential labour market experience of women and men; (b) the differential pension arrangements for women and men; and (c) the gender implications of reforms and policy measures. The availability of data in internationally comparable sources, e.g. the databases of the United Nations, Eurostat and the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), has been an important consideration in choosing the indicators. However, work during 2009 has confirmed that international sources contain information on pensions and financial security in old age in a gender context only for a limited number of UNECE member States, which highlights the importance of using national sources in gathering these data.
9. The main issues to be covered by the long-term care indicators pertain to the ways of funding of personal care and to the providers of such care. The first stage in the development of these indicators in 2009 involved analysis of the different definitions used in different international and national sources. This work revealed that international standards of care indicators are not well established, and that serious quality issues remain in existing European and international data collections. These have been discussed with data collecting organizations at a number of international meetings. A provisional set of long-term care indicators and their underlying concepts have been discussed at a recent international expert meeting on monitoring long-term care for the elderly (Jerusalem, 6–9 September 2009), organized jointly by ECV and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services of the State of Israel.
10. An informal document containing a provisional list of both gender-specific and long-term care indicators, with methodological notes and sources, will be prepared and presented for discussion at the Working Group's second meeting in November. Selected indicators in a visualized format will also be delivered in a separate document.
11. In June 2009, the secretariat, together with ECV, requested focal points on ageing in the UNECE region to update existing data and supply currently missing data on the already developed indicators on (a) demography, (b) income and wealth, (c) the labour market, and (d) social protection and financial sustainability. The project team at ECV has compiled templates for this data collection and is serving as a contact point for technical and methodological issues. Since the data collection for monitoring MIPAA/RIS is included in the UNECE Statistical Programme, the UNECE Statistical Division has requested national statistical offices to support the efforts of focal points on ageing in collecting these data.

B. Website

12. In 2009, the contents, structure and layout of the monitoring RIS website have been reorganized to make it more user-friendly. The frequency of updating the website has also been increased. The main changes on the website will be presented to the Working Group at its second meeting. The role of this website as the main source for exchanging information on the implementation of MIPAA/RIS in the UNECE region will be strengthened through the increased involvement of countries in terms of providing material for the updates. A new initiative of disseminating mainstreaming ageing information with the help of regular newsletters is also planned.

III. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

A. Road Map for Mainstreaming Ageing

13. The Working Group is making efforts to develop capacity through the Road Map for Mainstreaming Ageing, a practical project that aims to provide guidance in formulating ageing-related policies to countries in need. At the request of Armenia, the secretariat has undertaken implementation of the project in that country. As it coincides with the development of policy strategy on sustainable social development in Armenia for 2010–2021, which includes a component on ageing and older persons and the corresponding action plan, the Road Map project is being tailored towards having the strategy and action plan as outputs. This has the advantage that the recommendations based on the desk and field studies will be integrated into these documents already during the drafting phase. A joint project team of international and local experts has been established.

14. During the desk study phase, relevant documents pertaining to the ageing situation in the country were identified, translated to English, and studied for an initial appraisal of the situation. A UNECE pre-mission to Armenia took place in April 2009 to collect information about the status of development of the ageing strategy and to agree upon project implementation. This was followed by a fact-finding mission (29 June–3 July 2009) during which interviews were carried out with 29 stakeholders representing government, the private sector, trade unions, civil society and international organizations with field expertise or a country presence. In addition, informal consultations were held with a number of representatives of the target group of older persons. Interviews were held in Yerevan and in the Gyumri region.

15. The information collected during the mission is currently being used for drafting the strategy and action plan. Based on this information and the needs expressed by Armenia, international expertise is specifically required in the areas of (a) participation and integration of older persons, (b) awareness of ageing and older persons' concerns, (c) education and lifelong learning, and (d) monitoring and evaluation. The project team is scheduled to discuss the first draft of both the strategy and action plan in Yerevan at the end of October 2009.

16. It is expected to complete the formulation of the ageing strategy and action plan by mid-December, after which they will be circulated among stakeholders in Armenia. After integrating the feedback received from this broader circulation, the document is expected to be included in the strategy and action plan for sustainable social development for adoption by the Armenian

Government. In addition, a project report will be prepared by UNECE, describing the actions undertaken and reflecting on this experience in view of potential use in other countries. The project foresees evaluation of progress made in implementation after one year.

17. Other member States may find it beneficial to undergo a similar exercise, which the secretariat is prepared to organize depending on availability of the necessary extrabudgetary funding. Potential candidate countries are invited to contact the secretariat to discuss their situations and their potential participation. Potential donor countries are invited to explore possibilities of support.

B. Workshops

18. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with support from the United Nations Population Fund and in cooperation with UNECE, organized two subregional workshops for countries of the former Soviet Union (Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, 15–19 December 2008; Yerevan, 7–9 April 2009). A similar workshop for countries of South-Eastern Europe is being organized on Malta from 12 to 16 October 2009. The aims of the workshops are:

- (a) To improve understanding of how to identify and analyse challenges and opportunities related to ageing and demographic change;
- (b) To enhance national capacities to design and implement policies and programmes on ageing;
- (c) To promote participatory and evidence-based approaches to the design of ageing-related policies and programmes.

19. The workshops target government officials acting as national focal points on ageing, but engage also other stakeholders such as non-governmental organizations and the research community. They take a participatory learning approach, with participants presenting the policies and programmes on ageing carried out or developed in their respective countries. Participating Working Group members are invited to share their experiences.

IV. INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

20. The secretariat continues to coordinate the Generations and Gender Programme, which has become a leading international data source for studies of intergenerational and gender relationships and family issues. One of the many international research undertakings based on these data is the Multilinks project, led by the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute. Multilinks is specifically designed to support sound policymaking through new insights into how changing social contexts are affecting social integration and intergenerational solidarity in different European countries. Relying on the conceptual framework of that project, and based on the examples of policies and programmes from UNECE countries, the Working Group is scheduled to hold at its second meeting an in-depth discussion on intergenerational relationships. Participants are requested to prepare for this discussion using the material and questions included in the note on intergenerational relationships in ageing societies (ECE/WG.1/2009/5).