

Ministerial Roundtable

«Ensuring Ageing with Dignity»

UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing

Lisbon, 21-22 September, 2017

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the President of the Portuguese Republic as well as the Minister for the organization of this Ministerial Conference and the Government for its hospitality.

Unfortunately the Minister of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance was unable, for unpredictable reasons, to participate to the Ministerial Conference, so I was asked to deliver this speech on her behalf.

The fourth UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing is an excellent opportunity for the Member States of the UNECE to take stock of the current state of implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action and renew our commitments towards undertaking actions required to make further progress. We believe that our responses to ageing should seek to foster recovery, adaptation and dignity, within the context of a society undergoing rapid demographic change.

The Republic of Cyprus fully endorses the goals set in the Declaration with regards to Ensuring Ageing with Dignity. These goals require transformative approaches that recognize the rights of older people and enable them to thrive in a changing environment, fostering their ability to make multiple contributions in a society that respects their dignity and human rights, free from gender- and age-based discrimination.

On a national level, the Republic of Cyprus continues the efforts for integration and participation of older persons in society, through mainstreaming ageing into economic, social protection, labour market and health policies. Through the design and implementation of specific measures, programs and policies, we aim to continuously improve the quality of life of older people, in a safe environment, upholding the principles of self-determination and independence.

In 2014, in the framework of a major Social Welfare System Reform, the Guaranteed Minimum Income legislation was introduced, to ensure a minimum income for all citizens, including the elderly. In addition to a minimum income, the GMI provides the framework for two mechanisms, social care and social intervention. Social care provides for the subsidisation of the cost of home, institutional, respite and day care of GMI recipients. Social Intervention refers to the activation and social inclusion of GMI recipients. This action includes a wide spectrum of services to GMI recipients, that will empower and support them in their social integration.

NGOs and Local Authorities are encouraged to develop and run social care programmes, through subsidies and technical support. Through the State Aid Scheme, 62 organisations received state aid in 2016, specifically aimed at older people, with a total budget of around 1,5 ml euros.

To ensure the dignity of older persons requiring care services, the minimum quality standards of care structures are supervised by the Social Welfare Services of the Republic. Towards assuring the improvement of the quality of care services provided by the private sector (private for profit, NGOs and LAs), the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and

Social Insurance is in the process of amending the existing legislative framework on minimum standards of care structures and is also drafting a new Law on home carers.

The participation of older people in policy making is an integral part of ensuring ageing with dignity. The Elders Parliament, the Coordinating Body for Older Persons and the Advisory Board of Cyprus contribute to policy design on issues concerning the elderly and ensure both participation in social and community life, as well as ownership of policies and results.

A National Action Plan for Old Persons is now being prepared, incorporating the four main goals of the Vienna Declaration and the Commitments of the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Action Plan on Ageing. The policy goals of the 2017 Ministerial Declaration which will be adopted by this meeting, will be taken onboard and mainstreamed throughout the NAP, shaping the broader context in which more focused action can be taken by a wide range of stakeholders.

The new demographic trends will undoubtedly have profound implications on each of us, as well as for the communities we live in. The Republic of Cyprus stands ready to renew its commitment to focus attention on the needs and rights of older persons and expand on previous policy instruments, setting this commitment within the new context of the Ministerial Declaration.