

UNECE Regional Research Forum on Ageing

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Statement of the Research Forum to the Ministerial Conference on Ageing

- 1** We, about 80 researchers representing various disciplines of ageing research from across the UNECE region, have gathered at the Research Forum in Lisbon, Portugal, with the aim to foster a dialogue around the three themes of the Ministerial Conference ('Recognizing the potential of older people', 'Encouraging longer working life and ability to work' and 'Ensuring ageing with dignity'), to identify findings to underpin the Ministerial Declaration with evidence from research on ageing, and to identify priority areas of future research on ageing.
- 2** We support the Ministerial Declaration which strives to promote the Conference's theme 'A Sustainable Society for All Ages: Realizing the potential of living longer' and to further the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Regional Implementation Strategy (UNECE RIS). This process needs to be informed by multidisciplinary research on ageing inclusive of a life course, gender and other essential perspectives.
- 3** We also support the endeavours of the United Nations in promoting Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) addressing inter alia the fight against poverty, the reduction of inequalities and the advance of gender equality. In this context, we are mindful of the 'Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health' adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2016 with its focus on aligning health systems to the needs of older populations and developing sustainable and equitable systems for providing long-term care.
- 4** The unprecedented demographic changes in association with technological, political, economic and social transformations call for significant efforts to analyse the potential of living longer. This means finding new ways for extending healthy life years, developing more appropriate models of organizing work and prolonging work lives, and designing new technologies, products and services all with the involvement of older people and for their benefit, thereby ensuring ageing for all with dignity. We believe that this will require strategies to combat ageism, and enable equal access to services and facilities for people in need of care as well as acknowledging volunteering and informal caring as a precondition for sustainable development of a society for all ages. There are also significant opportunities around the Silver Economy.
- 5** Multidisciplinary research, combining contributions from basic science and theoretical frameworks to applied research, monitoring and evaluation will play an important role in understanding and adjusting to global demographic change.

We appreciate the general acknowledgement of scientific research on ageing by national governments. However, there are still large differences in the extent to which economic and human resources as well as unconditional access to data and knowledge sources are provided. We consider these aspects a precondition for implementing both national and cross-national research on ageing. Indeed, mutual exchange of good practice and results of scientific research need to be extended across the UNECE region – programmes and initiatives that have been developed within the European Union may serve as models for future cooperation within and beyond the larger Europe. We also recognize that such cooperation should be reciprocal and equitable.

- 6 We note that within the UNECE Region there are different groups of countries with specific challenges that need to be addressed appropriately. For example, processes of ageing populations in Eastern Europe must be understood in their specific idiosyncrasies. Another example is Southern Europe characterized by a familialistic society based on informal care and recently struggling under the effects of the crisis and adjustment programmes. These experiences and challenges allow for ample opportunities to learn from each other, to adapt successful strategies, and to exchange experiences in organizational structures and models of research, education and training.
- 7 To realise the potential both of population ageing and of individual men and women enjoying increasing longevity, we need to embark on a paradigm shift related to a range of societal institutions and cultural traditions, and social and economic values, that are shaping life-course patterns, as well as narratives of ageing. Based on an age-friendly culture that includes intergenerational and life-course-oriented values and strategies, policies on ageing need to change from a discourse on costs towards a design of social investment. The reforms of the welfare state and adjustment of economic development towards sustainability with related amendments of legal frameworks need to promote preventative, participative and inclusive strategies across various policy sectors. Appropriate research approaches to underpinning such strategies should entail the following:
 - Exploring the potentials of involving the various groups of older people in social, political and cultural discourse and planning
 - Investigating necessary preconditions for implementing a culture of (positive) ageing with a view on the diversity of societal groups, in particular at higher ages
 - Analysing social investment initiatives, including knowledge on the drivers of technology for an ageing population, and exploring possibilities to equally distribute the potentials of the silver economy

- Analysing the efficacy of policy measures to overcome poverty and inequalities, namely those based on gender, socio-economic, ethnic, sexual and generational status, and to combat social exclusion of older people in general
 - Exploring the potentials of reducing and preventing cumulative inequalities by adopting a life course perspective as a framework to understand well-being in later life
 - Exploring innovative ways to extend working lives and developing concepts of sustainable and valuable work lives in a life-course perspective (trajectories, interfaces)
 - Exploring the challenges of men and women to reconcile paid work and non-paid activities, including care provided outside kin relationships
 - Promoting further multidisciplinary research on human rights in old age and measures for combating ageism, i.e. exploring attitudes and types of stereotypes, the role of media, institutional discrimination, definitions of 'dignity' and 'older persons' in different demographic, cultural and political contexts
 - Identifying predictors of mistreatment of older adults in families, in the public sphere and in residential settings, and its consequences
 - Synthesizing existing results of ageing research to learn from existing knowledge
- 8** The participants of the Lisbon Research Forum commit themselves to contribute essential evidence to inform policy measures for implementing the MIPAA and the UNECE RIS/MIPAA during the fourth implementation cycle (2017–2022) with a view of reaching the goal of the MIPAA: A Society for all Ages.

Lisbon, 20 September 2017