

5 Years Chair of the Working Group on Ageing

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Thank you for unanimously electing the new Bureau, which includes new as well as long-serving members.

I have been the Chair for the last five years, so let me summarize briefly the WG's key achievements over that period and thank all of you for your encouragement and dedicated work.

Let me briefly look back – for those who are new to national and international policies on ageing and for those who have been contributors and comrades on our successful way. **I would like to look back to the very beginning** when I became Chair of the WG in 2010, just two years after its establishment, following Mr. Miloslav Hettes from Slovakia, the first Chair.

And I would like to go back even further in history and point out, that the United Nations is a very forward looking institution, which notices and takes up international trends in a very timely fashion – you know it held the 1st World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna as early as 1982 however without active follow-up. But the UN established the UN Programme on Ageing and passed the Resolution on the United Nations Principles for Older Persons in 1991.

Working on ageing policies in 1997, I had the privileged opportunity, together with Dirk Jarré among others, to take **part in the UN Expert Group preparing the 2nd International Plan of Action on Ageing,** which was adopted in Madrid in 2002.

As many of you remember, after the 2nd World Assembly on Ageing, Austria together with Spain took the initiative to establish a **“Task Force on Monitoring RIS”**. **At that time, 20 years after Vienna, Austria wanted to demonstrate** that an International Plan of Action also needs an international review and appraisal of its implementation at the regional level.

Actually as early as 2004, **the CsocD** in para 7 **of its resolution 42/1** requested “the United Nations regional commissions, within their mandates, to promote and facilitate the implementation, review and appraisal of and dissemination of information about the Madrid Plan of Action at the regional level”, **but UNECE did not react at that time.**

Therefore this **“Task Force”**, consisting of governmental and non-governmental representatives and scientists in collaboration with the UNECE secretariat, became the **Preparatory Committee of the 1st review and appraisal and of the León conference in 2007.**

In León it became clear to the **ministers that an intergovernmental UNECE Working Group on Ageing would be essential to promote ageing policies** and the interests of older persons in the UNECE, the region whose population is ageing particularly rapidly.

Since 2008 **the Working Group** has contributed to the **effective implementation of the commitments** of the MIPAA/RIS as well as of the León and Vienna Ministerial Declarations, in accordance with its terms of reference. Our **exchange of experience** and **discussion on ageing policies have provided direction and guidance for all our work in the field of ageing**, taking into account the different needs of individual countries.

What have been the main activities of the WGA?

1. Roadmaps on Mainstreaming Ageing

After the **Roadmap on Mainstreaming Ageing** for Armenia in 2009, the one for Moldova was developed in 2011 and the Roadmap for Georgia is now on its way to getting the Government's endorsement.

2. Policy Briefs on Ageing

Since 2011, **8 Policy Briefs have been published** and their titles alone are an **impressive reflection of our debates**:

Age-friendly employment: policies and practices,
Tapping the potential of volunteering and
Cooperation on Ageing Policies in the UNECE region, in 2011;
Images of older persons, and
Active ageing, in 2012;
Abuse of Older Persons and
Innovative and empowering strategies for care, in 2014;
and Ensuring dignity and non-discrimination of people with
dementia in 2015.

Many of these have been translated into German, Spanish,
French, Serbian and Russian.

3. Mainstreaming Ageing in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development

The last two years the Bureau and the Chair have spent a lot of time **on mainstreaming ageing into the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development**, which was adopted by the heads of state in September this year. I think this was our **first success on the international level** in lobbying for the interests of older persons in a very important **international milestone document** which initially did not even mention them.

4. Strengthen the role of the UN regional commissions

Another success on the international level is the **Resolution on the Modalities for the third review and appraisal** of MIPAA, which was adopted by the **CsocD** in February this year. We managed to take a step forward in strengthening the regional commissions. The resolution **no longer “encourages”, but “requests” the regional commissions** to implement the review and appraisal.

5. The most important event under my chairpersonship: The Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Vienna in 2012

This was the 2nd review and appraisal of the implementation of MIPAA, ten years after Madrid under the motto: **“Ensuring a society for all ages: Promoting quality of life and active ageing”**

with its four main goals:

- * To stay in work longer and healthier
- * To participate in society without discrimination or social exclusion
- * To enjoy dignity, health and independence in old age
- * And to ensure intergenerational solidarity - for the generations of today and of tomorrow.

6. Discussion Groups in the WGA

Following the 2012 Vienna Conference our WG set up “Discussion Groups” to make our exchange of experience more lively and personal, and I think this initiative has strengthened our discussion process and our work.

7. 4th Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Istanbul 2017

Now we are about to start preparing the 3rd review and appraisal of MIPAA implementation and the next Ministerial conference in Istanbul, and we will provide help and guidance for our colleagues from Turkey in doing so.

What have been the major achievements of our work?

Let me just mention some of the most important ones:

In the 2012 **Vienna** Ministerial declaration, **we noted as significant progress**, the increasing awareness and attention by policy makers, the media and the general public regarding issues of population and individual ageing, including growing recognition of the dignity and fundamental human rights of older persons.

In parallel to this process, **a change of the images of ageing and older people** has been observed. Ageing is no longer perceived as a burden but also as an opportunity.

The **potential of older people** and their contribution to society have become more visible. **Civil society has been strengthened** through mechanisms representing the interests of older persons, facilitating their participation in political, economic, social and cultural life.

MS have established **innovative approaches** in providing educational, health, rehabilitation and **social services**.

MS have implemented **initiatives to adapt national social protection systems** to the consequences of demographic change.

In the context of the Vienna Conference **active ageing was set up as the central concept and operational approach of national and regional policies on ageing** and, as a result, the AAI was developed in cooperation with the European Union to monitor active ageing policies.

The **Active Ageing approach has been mainstreamed and taken up in all policy fields**. And the next step with the Istanbul conference is to realize the **potential and the responsibilities** of the individual as well as of ageing policies for **“transforming our longer living world”**.

Let me conclude by expressing my appreciation for you as the National Focal Points on Ageing:

I think my brief summary has shown that we have achieved impressive results. All our successful work has been built on **your work and your experience.**

Therefore I would like to **thank all of you, as well as Vitalija and her team at the Secretariat,** for your excellent work.

But we are also **aware of numerous challenges in implementing MIPAA/RIS and active ageing policies** and I look forward to productive cooperation in the years to come.

You know: Active Ageing means:

We don't stop playing because we grow old.

We grow old because we stop playing!