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Economic Commission for Europe

Working Group on Ageing

Fourth meeting

Geneva, 21 and 22 November 2011

Report of the Working Group on Ageing on its fourth meeting

I. Introduction

A. Attendance

1. The fourth meeting of the Working Group on Ageing (WGA) was held on 21 and 22 November 2011 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.
2. Representatives from the following 34 member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) participated: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Holy See participated as an observer State.
3. Representatives from the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research in Vienna (ECV) also participated in the meeting, as did representatives from the following non-governmental organizations: European Federation of Older Persons (EURAG), the International Network on the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA), Red Cross of Serbia, and HelpAge International. Representatives of the International Organisation for Migration and International Labour Office additionally took part on the second day of the meeting.
4. The total number of participants was 61. A full list is available on the meeting website.¹

¹ <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=18219>

B. Organizational matters

5. The Director of Statistical Division of UNECE made an opening statement.
6. The Working Group, taking into account the corrigendum, approved the meeting's agenda as contained in documents ECE/WG.1/2011/1 and ECE/WG.1/2011/1/Corr.1.

II. Election of Officers

7. The Working Group re-elected a representative of Austria as its Chair and a representative of Armenia as its Vice-Chair. Delegates of the following member States were re-elected to the Bureau: Austria, Armenia, Belgium, Germany, Georgia, Malta, Serbia, Spain and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, whereas Canada became a new member to the Bureau. The representatives of EURAG and ECV were also invited to participate in the Bureau's meetings.

III. Work of the Bureau

8. A representative of Spain informed the Working Group about the third meeting of the Bureau (Madrid, Spain, 24 – 25 March 2011), referencing the report of the meeting (ECE/WG.1/2011/3).

IV. Preparation for the Regional Ministerial Conference

9. A representative of Austria presented a draft annotated provisional agenda for the Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Vienna in 2012, referencing the note prepared by Austria and the Secretariat (ECE/WG.1/2011/RD4). The proposals included the general outline of the programme, the themes of the expert and ministerial panels, the suggested list of keynote speakers, rapporteurs, moderators, and panellists as well as information on the venue.

10. The Working Group noted that for the list of speakers a more balanced regional representation may be desirable; therefore it was decided that national focal points will have the opportunity to suggest further speakers/moderators/rapporteurs/panellists for the expert and ministerial panels until 5 December 2011. The national focal points were also asked to indicate in which panel discussions their country representatives might be interested to take part.

11. Members of the Working Group were encouraged to promote the attendance of their respective ministers to the Ministerial Conference. In this respect, several delegates asked organisers to ensure that participating ministers have sufficient time for an exchange of opinion among themselves. Responding to this request, Austria, the host of the Conference, proposed to organise a special dinner event for the ministers on 19 September 2012 in the framework of the reception of the mayor of Vienna.

12. The co-ordinators of the research- and NGO-forums informed the Working Group on the progress in the organisation of these two satellite forums to the Ministerial Conference.

13. A representative of Austria presented a concept note for drafting a Political Declaration of the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing, which evolved from the work of the Declaration Drafting Group during the last six months. The concept note outlined a structure of the declaration, its main themes, policy goals as well as priorities to

be implemented during the third cycle of MIPAA/RIS. In the subsequent discussion it was mentioned that the effects of the ongoing economic crisis on the situation of older persons may be considered in the forthcoming declaration.

14 It was decided that this concept note, including comments from the Working Group, will serve as a basis for the preparation of a first draft of a Ministerial Declaration under the chairmanship of Austria and in consultation with members of the Declaration Drafting Group.

V. Second cycle of review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS: national reports

15 The Secretariat reported about progress made in the second cycle of review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS that was launched with the dissemination of guidelines for preparing country reports in May 2011. At the time of the Fourth meeting of the Working Group on Ageing, 24 country reports had been received (Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Great Britain, Iceland, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine). The majority of reports are in English, three reports are in Russian. Another eleven countries had requested extended deadlines due to delays in approval or translation (Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia). Countries may still submit reports until the end of 2011. Some countries will be holding stakeholder meetings or have other ongoing national processes which will only allow them to complete their reporting during 2012. The UNECE Secretariat will attempt to take into account as much as possible late submissions for the analysis. All reports received can be accessed on the UNECE website.²

16. During the discussion, member States shared the experiences in preparing their reports. Several delegates highlighted how they had integrated participatory elements in the preparation, requesting inputs from different departments of relevant ministries, including government departments at decentralized levels, organizing stakeholder consultations, and discussing early drafts with national and international experts on ageing. Member States found that the preparation process involving participatory elements was rather time-consuming, and having to seek approval from several hierarchical levels had caused delays in several cases. In some instances, capacities to prepare complete reports were found to be limited or not enough political priority was attached to the exercise to make sufficient staff time available. In several instances, the need to prepare translations of the reports also caused delays. Several delegates demanded that in spite of these difficulties timely submission should be considered as of highest importance by all member States. For future review and appraisal cycles, the experiences in timing may be taken into account early on in the planning process.

17. The UNECE Secretariat prepared a short overview of completeness and preliminary substantive findings and explained how reports will be reviewed based on a matrix reflecting the information requested in the guidelines. Based on the analysis of the country reports, a synthesis report reflecting main regional developments will be prepared, the first draft of which shall be available in March 2012 to be discussed by the Bureau during its next meeting.

² <http://www.unecce.org/the-population-unit/areas-of-work/ageing/ageing/mipaaris/country-reports.html>

18. Member States agreed that the synthesis report should have an empirical annex with data covering the entire UNECE region. The annex should reflect the indicators developed by ECV as well as statistical work done at UNECE. The annex may be structured to reflect the topics of the 2012 Ministerial Conference in Vienna, to provide complementary material for the discussions during the Conference. UNECE and ECV agreed to work together on developing this annex. The synthesis report will be officially presented at the Ministerial Conference in Vienna. UNECE member States can make additional suggestions for the development of the report until the end of the year 2011.

IV. Implementation of the Work Programme in 2011

19. The Working Group was referred to the note on the Implementation of the Work Programme (ECE/WG.1/2011/4) and the notes prepared by the secretariat on Road maps for mainstreaming ageing (ECE/WG.1/2011/RD6) and on Generations and Gender Programme (ECE/WG.1/2011/RD/7).

A. Capacity Development

20. To set the stage for the discussion on the Road map for mainstreaming ageing in the Republic of Moldova, the WGA was informed about the findings from the national Survey on Ageing undertaken in the country with support from United Nations Division of Economic and Social Affairs. The survey was conducted in parallel with the Road map project and its findings support main recommendations of the latter.

21. A representative of the Republic of Moldova informed participants about the progress during the final stage of the Road map development project together with UNECE and outlined the steps towards its adoption by the government in 2012. The WGA was also informed that the National strategic programme on demographic security for 2011-2025 was adopted by the Republic of Moldova in October 2011, with a reference to the Road map as a forthcoming document on ageing issues. The Working Group agreed on the publication of the finalized version of the Road Map document.

22. A representative of Georgia indicated an interest to participate in the project of a Road map for mainstreaming ageing.

23. A representative of the Czech Republic informed the Working Group about a regional capacity development workshop on the topic "Addressing Current Social and Health Issues in Ageing", which took place in Prague, Czech Republic, on 3-7 October 2011. The workshop was jointly organised by the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the International Institute on Ageing, Malta-United Nations, with the participation of the UNECE secretariat.

24. A representative from Israel informed delegates about a forthcoming training workshop on the topic "Community Services for the Elderly", organised by Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation in collaboration with the UNECE secretariat. The workshop will take place on 5-14 March 2012 in Haifa, Israel. A leaflet and provisional programme for the workshop are available on the UNECE website. Members of the Working Group were invited to attend the workshop and to pass on details to interested colleagues.

B. Policy briefs with good practice examples

25. The secretariat presented an introduction to the concept of policy briefs and reported on progress in drafting a new policy brief on the topic “Images of older persons”. The Working Group discussed the draft and provided comments and suggestions, including the need to encourage a realistic portrayal of older persons. The secretariat will finalise the draft by taking the suggested amendments into consideration.

26. The Working Group, after deliberation, decided that a policy brief to be prepared and presented at its next meeting should be on the topic of “Active Ageing”. Further briefs could be considered, depending on availability of extra-budgetary staff and funding. A number of topics were suggested, e.g. “Abuse of older person”; “Rights of older persons”; “Improvement of services through information technologies”; “Working world of tomorrow: Young and old working together”.

C. Generations and Gender Programme

27. The Generations and Gender Programme (GGP) consists of (a) a panel survey with data collected in up to three waves per country so far and (b) a contextual data base storing information about health, pension and education systems as well as demographic indicators in the participating countries.

28. The UNECE Secretariat serves as the clearinghouse for administration of the GGP; it is represented on the GGP Consortium Board and Advisory Board and coordinates the International Working Group, which comprises national focal points from governmental institutions, national statistical offices, and population research institutes from countries participating in the Programme. In the context of WGA, the UNECE Secretariat also seeks to provide an inter-governmental platform to discuss GGP research in its relevance for policy-making in the UNECE region.

29. UNECE member States acknowledged the importance of the GGP as a source of evidence of demographic and social trends that provides useful insights regarding the impact of existing policies. UNECE member States decided to consider how to integrate the research outputs of the programme into the Ministerial Conference or its satellite events in Vienna in September 2012.

VII “Quality of life and active ageing”: in-depth discussion

30. A key note speaker delivered a speech on the topic “Active ageing and quality of life in old age”, which was followed by a discussion based on the list of questions disseminated in advance.

31. It was suggested that members of the Working Group may submit any relevant examples of good practice to the topic of the in-depth discussion. The key note speaker will implement suggestions made by the Working Group and will submit the final report to the UNECE secretariat for publication.

VIII. Financing of the Work Programme

32. The secretariat provided detailed information on the staff and financial situation of the Population unit that serves as the Secretariat to WGA and emphasised the urgent need for extra-budgetary funds for the implementation of the proposed 2012-2013 activities under the WGA programme of work.

33. The financing of a Junior Professional Officer by Germany for a three-year period (2008-2011) was acknowledged, as well as contributions by Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Israel, Malta, Slovakia, and Spain. These contributions, together with the EU funding in 2009-2010 under the joint management project on Ageing, Generations and Gender, ensured the implementation the WGA programme of work over the last three years.

34. Working Group members were invited to explore with their Ministries the possibilities for making contributions to the UNECE Trust Fund on Ageing, to support the Working Group's activities. For this purpose the secretariat will issue a written appeal for funding to the member States of the WGA.

35. The representative of Belgium reasserted his country's support as expressed in the hosting of the next meeting of the Bureau of the Working Group on Ageing in 2012 in Brussels

IX. Review of subprogramme performance and programme planning

36. The Director of the Statistical Division informed the WGA about the UNECE activities review process undertaken by the Executive Committee. The Population subprogramme will be reviewed on 12 December 2011 and the Chair of the WGA is invited to report to the Executive Committee on the achievements and value added of the work done under the programme of the Working Group.

37. The Secretariat also presented four documents related to the review of subprogramme performance and programme planning in the current and forthcoming biennial periods. The proposed documents - the draft biennial Evaluation of the Population component for 2010-2011 (ECE/WG.1/2011/RD1), the draft programme of work of the Working Group on Ageing for 2012-2013 (ECE/WG.1/2011/5), the biennial evaluation plan for 2012-2013 of the Population component (ECE/WG.1/2011/RD2), and of the draft Strategic framework for 2014-2015 (ECE/WG.1/2011/RD3) - were approved without changes by the Working Group.

X. Summary and conclusions

38. The Chair, Vice-Chair and seven previous Bureau members were re-elected. Canada was elected as a new member. The representatives of EURAG and ECV were invited to join the Bureau as observers.

39. 2012 Ministerial Conference Vienna:

(a) The proposed provisional agenda of the conference and the outline for a Ministerial Declaration were approved;

(b) It was decided that member States should send additional suggestions on possible candidates to be considered as speakers, moderators, rapporteurs, or panellists to the UNECE Secretariat and Austria by 5 December 2011.

40. Country reports: Members States were encouraged to submit the outstanding national reports on the implementation of MIPAA/RIS during its second cycle before the end of 2011. Members States may also send their suggestions for the synthesis report. It was agreed that ECV together with the UNECE Statistical division will prepare an empirical annex to the synthesis report.

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41. Other elements of work programme:
- (a) Capacity development:
 - (i) Road Maps for Mainstreaming Ageing: The Road Map for Mainstreaming Ageing in the Republic of Moldova was approved for publication. Georgia has come forward as a new candidate for this project.
 - (ii) A capacity building training workshop will be held in March 2012 in Haifa/Israel. National focal points are encouraged to disseminate this information to potential participants in their country.
 - (b) A policy brief on the topic “Active ageing” will be prepared in 2012. Further briefs could be considered, depending on availability of extra-budgetary staff and funding. A number of topics were suggested, e.g. “Abuse of older person”; “Rights of older persons”; “Improvement of services through information technologies”; “Working world of tomorrow: Young and old working together”.
 - (c) Member States will consider how the GGP research outputs could be integrated into the programme of the Ministerial Conference or its satellite events in Vienna in September 2012.
42. As a follow up to the in-depth discussion “Quality of life and active ageing” member States agreed to send additional good practice examples and to share their views on the questions that were disseminated before the event.
43. The documents related to the review of Population subprogramme performance and programme planning in the current and forthcoming biennial periods were approved.
44. Member States will explore the possibilities for financial contributions to the UNECE Trust Fund on Ageing in order to support the implementation of the work programme of the WGA in 2012-2013.
45. The Working Group will hold its fifth annual meeting on 22 and 23 November 2012 in Geneva. The Bureau will meet on 22 and 23 March 2012 in Brussels upon invitation of Belgium.
46. The Chair thanked the participants and closed the meeting.
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