ACTIVE AGEING
AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN OLD AGE

Clemens Tesch-Roemer, German Centre of Gerontology
The author would like to thank his colleagues at the German Centre of Gerontology (in alphabetic order) Rebecka Andrick, Frank Berner, Heribert Engstler, Claudia Gaehlsdorf, Christine Hagen, Stefanie Hartmann, Andreas Motel-Klingebiel, Doreen Mueller, Doerte Naumann, Laura Romeu Gordo, Judith Rossow, Benjamin Schuez, and Susanne Wurm for intellectual and social support in writing this paper. Appreciation is expressed to Wendy Marth for English editing.

NOTE

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe or the European Union.
Adjuncting societies to population ageing is a distinct challenge of our time. Active ageing has been developed as a strategy to leverage the potential of individuals to improve awareness of what every one of us can do to keep fit and healthy for as long as possible. Physical activity, healthy eating, life-long learning and staying integrated in the work life as a paid employee, as an entrepreneur or as a volunteer – all these are elements of an active life style that should characterize the whole life-course. To allow individuals to live and age actively, societies have a responsibility to invest in conducive frameworks. Such investments can take place in the prevention and health care sectors, in education and labour markets. At the same time, citizens should be able to rely on a supportive infrastructure in case of real need and frailty.

The present paper provides an important input to the discussion of these elements of an integrated approach to active ageing. It provides a source of inspiration for member States concerned with the implementation of active ageing policies. The paper is based on the key note speech by Prof. Dr. Clemens Tesch-Römer of the German Centre of Gerontology in Berlin and is the result of his research and the discussion it incurred among member States during the Fourth meeting of the UNECE Working Group on Ageing in November 2011.

The UNECE Working Group on Ageing was established as an intergovernmental body reporting to the UNECE Executive Committee in 2008. It facilitates and monitors implementation of the international policy framework on ageing as set out in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and its Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS), both adopted in 2002. The Working Group on Ageing has become an important forum where member States can discuss strategies and good practice examples in response to ageing in the region.

The year 2012 has been proclaimed the European year for active ageing and solidarity between generations. The in-depth discussion on active ageing during the Working Group meeting in November 2011 and the incurring paper represent the UNECE contribution to this debate and pave the ground for further elaborations on the issue at the UNECE Ministerial Conference Ensuring a society for all ages: promoting quality of life and active ageing that takes place in Vienna, Austria, on 19-20 September 2012.

UNECE is grateful to the author for his contribution and to UNECE member States for their work on this paper and encourages governments, stakeholders and individuals to take it to the next level – to fill it with life and make it happen.