

Vienna Research Forum Statement

Dated 20th September 2012

1. We have come together at the Research Forum in Vienna, Austria, to contribute to the Ministerial Conference on Ageing with its theme ‘Ensuring a Society for All Ages: Promoting Quality of Life and Active Ageing’. We unequivocally support the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). We are convinced that the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy for MIPAA (UNECE RIS/MIPAA)¹ is a sound framework for policy actions on ageing in our countries. We are also convinced that such actions will have to be informed by and founded on valid, reliable, representative and timely evidence drawn from a high quality multidisciplinary research on ageing, incorporating life course perspective and placing an essential focus on gender.
2. We realise that our region and the entire world have been undergoing important demographic change with social, familial, economic, political and technological implications, and population ageing will be one of the most powerful forces driving these global transformations. Through research and knowledge dissemination, we want to understand the full extent and significance of these transformations and contribute to capacity development in designing appropriate policy responses. Emphasis need to be placed towards capacity-building in gerontological expertise, so as to assist shaping the society for all ages consistent with the goals of MIPAA/RIS, as well as in securing and enhancing the dividends of longevity gains. This requires a significant investment in the development of academic centres in the field of research on ageing, as well as rolling out training programmes in the field of gerontology to ensure an effective provision of all essential social and health services.
3. We recognise that researchers and research institutions of the UNECE region are among those leading the global efforts in identifying the mechanisms of individual and population ageing and therefore we have a special responsibility to share the scientific analysis of ageing and its implications with the rest of the world. To realise this endeavour, adequate and timely funding is required from both public and private sources and also obligations to make all necessary data accessible to researchers, policymakers and practitioners. We must do more and better research to counter the growing concerns often raised in policy debates in which population ageing is seen as a burden to the society, in particular during times of economic crisis, and elaborate approaches for removing the institutional and social barriers in mobilising the potential of older people.
4. We acknowledge in particular that Eastern Europe countries, as well as countries of the former Soviet Union, in recent decades have undergone multifaceted transitions and gathered invaluable experiences in addressing numerous challenges of building cohesive and prosperous societies. Many of these countries have also been adjusting to their demographic transition by developing policies for active and healthy ageing, by reforming their pension systems, reorganizing labour markets and modernizing their health and social care systems. These countries need to be supported further in building research capacity and in formulating evidence-informed policymaking, especially in

¹ http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/docs/ece/2002/ECE_AC23_2002_2_Rev6_e.pdf

view of the fact that efforts to deal with the crisis may undermine attempts to improve the programmes that exist in these countries to enhance well-being and social integration of older people. Reciprocity is required in drawing lessons across the countries of the UNECE region.

5. We note the progress achieved within the priority areas for policy related research on ageing outlined in the Research Agenda on Ageing for the 21st Century.² We are eager to see that the results of this research are translated into good practices, evaluated and applied in more effective and efficient policy responses to the challenges and opportunities of ageing. To achieve this, the policy formulation and its evaluation must be performed through a concerted and well-coordinated engagement of experts from public authorities, research institutions, academia, civil society including employers and advocacy groups, trade unions, the business sector, older people themselves and representatives from younger generations, not just at the national level but also at the regional and local levels. Policies should clearly seek to respond to the needs and preferences of older persons by giving them the opportunity to make their voices and opinions heard as experts in their own right, and all new initiatives or policy developments should aim to promote active and healthy ageing and the quality of life among the current and future generations of older people.
6. We regard the WHO Framework on Knowledge translation³ as a useful tool for promoting evidence informed policy in various areas of individual and population ageing. ‘Strengthening the evidence base and research’ has been singled out as one of the four strategic priority areas for the WHO Strategy and action plan for healthy ageing in Europe, 2012-2020.⁴ We welcome the initiatives of the Road Map for European Ageing Research, resulting from the FUTURAGE project funded by the European Commission⁵ and the European Research Area in Ageing (ERA-AGE) resulting in Europe’s first post-doctoral programme in the ageing field (FLARE) and the first European ageing research funded jointly by several European countries – *Active and Healthy Ageing Across the Life Course*. We also acknowledge the significance of the European Social Charter and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights that help strengthen human rights of older people, as well as the EU Directives against age discrimination and the recent European Charter on the rights and responsibilities of older persons in need of assistance.
7. The 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, the pilot European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIPAAH)⁶ and the Joint Programming Initiative ‘More Years, Better Lives – The Potential and Challenges of Demographic Change’⁷, as well as the EU programme ‘Ambient Assisted Living’⁸, have initiated a more systematic process identifying how research and innovation can best enhance and highlight the contribution that older people make to society. These initiatives as well as the Active Ageing Index (AAI) developed at the European Centre Vienna for the European Commission have the explicit purpose to encourage policymakers and relevant stakeholders at all levels to take most appropriate

² <http://www.imsersomayores.csic.es/documentos/documentos/desa-agenda-01.pdf>

³ http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/knowledge_translation/en/index.html

⁴ <http://www.euro.who.int/en/who-we-are/governance/regional-committee-for-europe/sixty-second-session>

⁵ <http://futurage.group.shef.ac.uk/>

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?section=active-healthy-ageing

⁷ <http://www.jp-demographic.eu/>

policy actions, with the goal of ensuring that longevity gains are not just additional years of life but an asset for social and economic development.

8. Exchange of knowledge, practice and policy experiences on ageing can make indispensable contribution at national, cross-national, and cross-cultural levels. To ensure such exchanges, both a sustainable *structure* and an ongoing *process* are needed and it must involve all key stakeholders from various parts of our region, most importantly older people as well as younger generations, to empower their interests further. We believe that such requirements in the UNECE region can be met by forming the online platform **Research Application and Dissemination Platform on Ageing (REAP-AGE)**. The formation of an initiating multidisciplinary group for exploring the feasibility of this proposal would be required at this first stage of such an endeavour.
9. The proposed platform would involve international experts from public and private sectors, academia, the civil society, the business sector, and labour and trade unions as well as older people, to help translate research findings into policy options and specific recommendations for policy actions. It would serve as the forum for exchanging innovative scientific ideas, help in designing rigorous studies, analysing research findings and monitoring current research and policy advancements, in order to identify the most promising replicable models (best practices) to inform evidence-based policy action on ageing. It would also provide opportunities for international experts to train each other in the development, analysis and dissemination of data on ageing. It can become a bridge between the Western, Central and Eastern European countries and the countries of the former Soviet Union for sharing the experience in evidence-based policy action on ageing and facilitating the exchange of ideas and experts between various countries for developing national capacity in the area of ageing.
10. European countries are entering the third cycle (2013–2017) of implementing the UNECE RIS/MIPAA, and we (the participants of the Vienna Research Forum) commit ourselves to produce and disseminate the essential evidence to inform policy efforts aimed at reaching the goal of the MIPAA: A Society for all Ages.