

**Expert Group Meeting: “Measuring population ageing: Bridging Research and Policy”, Bangkok, Thailand, 25–26 February 2019**

**Session 4: Ageing and the media**

Moderator: *Bernd Marin, European Bureau for Policy Consulting and Social Research*

Panel discussion:

- *Simon Cox, The Economist*
- *Elizabeth Isele, The Global Institute for Experienced Entrepreneurship*
- *Steven Petrow, The Washington Post*
- *Paola Scommegna, Population Reference Bureau*

Discussion

Population ageing is a well-established global demographic trend, with major socio-economic consequences. The long-term shift of the share of the population from the younger to the older ages is driven mainly by the declining levels of fertility, and also by the increases of life expectancy that are taking place almost everywhere. There is considerable international diversity in the onset and speed of population ageing, which, according to United Nations data, is most advanced in Japan and countries in Europe, followed by Northern America. Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and Oceania are projected to follow similar trends over the next few decades. Even in most of African countries, whose populations are still relatively young, the absolute number of older persons is growing rapidly, and is leading to long-term shifts in the age-structure.

Traditionally, the United Nations and most researchers have used measures and indicators that are mostly or entirely based on people’s chronological age, which provides a simple, clear and easily replicable way to measure and track various indicators of ageing. At the same time, there has been increasing recognition that the health status, type and level of activity, productivity, and other socio-economic characteristics of older persons have changed significantly over the last century, and even over the last several decades. This has led to the development of alternative concepts and measures of ageing, which provide different outlooks on the levels and trends of ageing, and a more nuanced appreciation of what ageing means in different contexts. At the frontline is the Characteristics Approach to the measurement of population ageing developed at IIASA.

These changes and the various approaches to understanding and measuring ageing, have important implications for the design and implementation of national development policies and programs, and for the follow-up and review of internationally agreed development goals that are related to or are affected by population ageing. Specifically, the different ways of measuring ageing affect the assessments of the evolution of the number of older persons, their living conditions, their contributions to the societies where

they live and their needs for social protection. They have significant implications for labour markets, life-long education and health, and the interactions and mutual support of older persons with the younger generations.

Recognizing the diverse stages and characteristics of ageing in various regions of the world, as well as the recent developments and innovations in measurement, the Population Division the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the International Institute for Applied System Analysis (IIASA), and Chulalongkorn University, in collaboration with the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), are organizing an international expert group meeting on ***“Measuring Population Ageing: Bridging Research and Policy”***, to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 25 to 26 February 2019.

This expert meeting will seek to take stock of different concepts and methodologies, and their applicability to and usefulness for various policy analyses and purposes. It will bring together experts to discuss key questions related to the measurement of population ageing, including discussion of traditional and new concepts and methods, and to assess their scope and limitations to support national policy design and implementation, as well as the regional and global review of progress in the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, as noted above. Experts from governmental and international organizations, from research institutions as well as civil society organizations will be invited to discuss the applicability of various measures of ageing in different contexts.

Mass media (print, radio and TV and digital media) is a critical platform for communicating the meanings and experiences of ageing between generations but also between different interest groups in society, such as government, researchers, civil society and the general public.

In the context of this meeting we will host a moderated discussion of media representatives on the role of media as they inform but also reflect public attitudes and opinions on ageing.

The panel will be asked to address questions such as:

- Has the media’s portrayal of ageing influenced society’s views and responses to population ageing? And if so, how and why?
- What messages do the mass media send to society about the later years in life?
- How are older adults presented and represented in the media?
- Has the media contributed to the prevailing negativity about ageing?
- What can the media do to change the perception of population ageing?
- Has the media contributed via one-sided messaging to the creation of a distorted (and often negative) view of ageing?
- What role does and can the media play to bridge the evidence-policy gap in relation to population ageing? How to message the facts? How distinguish facts from fiction?
- What are the drivers behind the media’s portrayal of older persons?
- What is the impact of positive and negative media portrayals of ageing?
- What is missing in the media’s current coverage of ageing?

Each discussant will provide a 5-minute introduction to the topic by address some or all of the questions listed above. The moderated panel will discuss these introductions of the panelists. At a second stage, the moderator will also take questions from the floor for further deliberations by the panel. The expected outcome of the media panel is a set of recommendations for the media, researchers and government on how to improve communication between these key stakeholders to support bridging the evidence-policy gap and to contribute to a balanced and objective approach to reporting on ageing and older persons.

Should you have additional questions, please contact either Ms. Stefanie Andruchowicz ([andrucho@iiasa.ac.it](mailto:andrucho@iiasa.ac.it)) or Ms. Karoline Schmid ([schmidk@un.org](mailto:schmidk@un.org))