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Economic Commission for Europe

Working Group on Ageing

Twelfth meeting

Geneva, 18 and 29 November 2019

Work of the Bureau

Report on the eleventh meeting of the Bureau of the Working Group on Ageing

I. Opening of the meeting and adoption of agenda

1. The Bureau meeting took place on 6-7 May 2019 in Lisbon, Portugal and was hosted by the Santa Casa de Misericórdia de Lisboa (Portugal). The Bureau members from the following member States attended the meeting: Belarus, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Norway, Portugal. The representatives of Slovenia and Israel as well as the director of the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research (European Centre Vienna), who represents researchers on the Bureau, were unable to attend. Ms. Gertraud Dayé, International Longevity Centre, participated on behalf of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Two additional host country representatives took part in the first plenary session of the meeting.
2. Mr. Edmundo Martinho, Chair of the Working Group on Ageing (WGA), representative of Portugal, chaired the meeting with the assistance of the Vice-Chair, Ms. Aina Strand, representative of Norway.
3. Mr. Edmundo Martinho welcomed the meeting participants on behalf of the host country. The Bureau adopted the agenda of the meeting without modifications.

II. Introduction by host country: keynote address and discussion

4. Ms. Ana Sofia Antunes, State Secretary for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities, welcomed the Bureau on behalf of Mr. José António Vieira da Silva, Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security of Portugal. She highlighted the importance of effective policies to address the challenges related to population ageing. Following cuts in social support spending due to the financial and economic crisis, Portugal has in recent years re-introduced support measures which have brought tangible improvements for the population.

5. Mr. Fernando Martins, President of APRe!, the Portuguese Association for Pensioners and Retired persons, explained that his organisation was founded 6 years ago when the impact of the economic crisis on older persons was strongly felt and grew in little time to a membership of over 10,000 persons. APRe! is one of very few civil society organisations representing the interests of older persons in Portugal.

6. The discussion following the introductory remarks focused on the connections between programmes for persons with disabilities and older persons and recent policy measures introduced to improve the situation of older persons and address the challenges linked to population ageing. The Secretary of State mentioned that in a forthcoming state policy for people with disabilities, older persons with disabilities will be specifically addressed. Among the issues of concern is the accessibility of the urban spaces, a case in point being Lisbon where the landscape and traditional pavements are challenging for anyone with reduced mobility. This poses a significant challenge for independent living. While the Portuguese government has made important steps towards improving the situation of older persons since the economic crisis, problems remain, as elsewhere in the region, including ageism, elder abuse, informal care, employment and educational opportunities for older people. Policy measures currently under development include new legislation on informal carers and a national strategy on dementia.

III. Brief on the main outcomes of the Vice-Chair's meeting with the ECE EXCOM; ECE Commission's decision on the name change and revised Terms of Reference for the Working Group on Ageing

7. The Bureau was informed by the Vice-Chair about her report to the ECE member States represented at the 103rd meeting EXCOM on 2 February 2019 and their endorsement of the new name and revised terms of reference of the Working Group on Ageing. Following EXCOM's endorsement, the Commission of ECE, at its sixty-eighth session on 10 April 2019, decided to change the name of the Working Group on Ageing to "Standing Working Group on Ageing" and adopted the revised terms of reference as contained in ECE/EX/2019/L.1.

8. This achievement closes over two years of negotiations between member States who, while not agreeing to the transformation of the Working Group on Ageing to a sectoral committee, agreed to a continuous mandate and corresponding name change which will give the group longer-term stability.

9. Bureau members noted the implications of the broadened terms of reference which now go beyond the implementation of MIPAA/RIS to include striving for synergies with the regional/national follow-up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other population-related international frameworks such as the ICPD Beyond 2014 and the WHO Global Strategy on Ageing and Health. It was suggested that the WGA could keep track of relevant agendas at WHO, ILO, etc. and connect with colleagues/country representatives following these at national and international level to help ensure that ageing issues are and remain on the agenda.

10. Bureau members were reminded that the transformation to a standing working group was resource neutral. Member states can support the activities of the group via the contributions to the Ageing fund at ECE. Portugal pledged to provide such support in addition to the funds already allocated to the development of the proposed guidelines on mainstreaming ageing. Members of the Bureau were further informed that they could support the work of the group by hosting one of the annual meetings and policy seminars during the renovation period from 2020 onwards when meeting rooms in the Palais des Nations will be difficult to book.

IV. Concept note on guidelines on mainstreaming ageing

11. The Chair informed members of the Bureau about progress towards developing a concept note for the proposed guidelines on mainstreaming ageing. The research lab Colabor (Collaborative Laboratory for Work, Employment and Social Protection) in Portugal was tasked with hiring a full-time researcher to support this activity. Different subject experts would be recruited to provide expertise on the respective policy areas (housing, transport, etc.) to be covered by the guidelines.

12. Based on the definition and key elements of mainstreaming ageing developed in the first ECE Policy Brief on Ageing, the secretariat presented a proposal to develop the guidelines as a set of 10 modules, each covering key aspects of mainstreaming such as data collection and analysis; awareness raising, advocacy and education; stakeholder engagement; the development of a strategic framework; the establishment of coordination mechanisms, screening of existing and new laws, policies and programmes, and monitoring and performance assessment.

13. Members of the Bureau made several suggestions to keep in mind for the development of the guidelines. These included the importance of critical transitions across the life course that are often not seamless in policy as different life stages such as childhood, working age, retirement are dealt with in silos. Another aspect discussed was the importance of acknowledging population ageing and older people clearly and not “hide” the challenges in a too holistic and broad approach that covers all generations. Macro elements of societal adaptation to population ageing and sustainability must be addressed as well as micro elements focusing on the situation older persons. It was mentioned that it would be important to illustrate the principles with good practices. There are many examples in the field of gender mainstreaming that could be consulted.

14. The Bureau was informed about the membership of the Task Force on Mainstreaming for which members of the Working Group volunteered following the eleventh meeting of the Working Group on Ageing. The Task Force includes representatives of ten member States (Austria, Belarus, Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Spain) and three NGOs (Ardgar Kazakhstan, ILC Canada, Turbota pro litnih v Ukraini).

15. It was broadly agreed that members of the Task Force would – after agreement on the concept note and the core elements to be covered - share own country experience on the different mainstreaming elements which would then be presented at the WGA meeting in November. The team of researchers tasked by Portugal would work on the key messages and arguments for mainstreaming ageing tailored to the different policy fields to support awareness raising and joint ownership across government departments.

16. The Bureau decided that a first meeting of the Task Fore should be convened in June.

V. Preparations for a policy seminar back to back with the twelfth meeting of the Working Group on Ageing: topic, concept note, contributors

17. Bureau members were invited to discuss and agree on the topic for the Second Policy Seminar on Ageing to be held on 20 November 2019. The secretariat proposed “Informal Care for Persons with Dementia” as informal care had been the second most voted topic in the 2018 consultation with WGA members on topics for policy seminars. Policy Brief No. 22 on the challenging roles of informal carers will be published ahead of the seminar and would be a useful background document informing the discussions along with the many

policy examples that were submitted to support its preparation. An emphasis on persons with dementia would allow to focus the discussion on a group of informal carers facing specific challenges and consider support measures developed in this field by member States.

18. Members of the Bureau discussed, and broadly agreed with, the proposed outline for the policy seminar. The introductory remarks to the seminar need to draw attention to the respective responsibilities of the public versus the family, and formal and informal care as suggested by Portugal. A first session will then consider the prevalence and trends of dementia in the ECE region and the international policy response such as the global action plan on the public health response to dementia (WHO). The second session will focus on the challenges experienced by informal carers. The third session will focus on the exchange of policy measures and practices by member States in the following areas: the need for information/peer support/psychological support; the integration of formal and informal care; work-care reconciliation/work-care-life-balance/respite care; and the financial implications of informal care provision for the family and social protection of informal carers.

19. Bureau members were further informed that the national focal point for Switzerland kindly arranged an expert lecture with Professor Barbara Lucas from the University of Geneva, who is currently conducting a research project on policies, practices and ethical issues related to dementia diagnosis between cure and care in the different cantons in Switzerland. This lecture could be combined with a site visit in Geneva in the afternoon if this can be arranged to provide WGA members with the possibility to learn more about services for informal carers in Switzerland.

20. The Bureau decided that the topic of the Policy Seminar on Ageing 2019 will be “Informal care for persons with dementia”.

VI. Progress on implementation of the WGA work programme for 2019

A. Roadmap project for Belarus

21. The secretariat and the representative from Belarus informed the Bureau about two field missions to Belarus in December 2018 and April 2019 during which discussions with government representatives and various stakeholder groups were held to inform the preparation of the roadmap for mainstreaming ageing. A consultant conducted a media analysis of print, online, radio and TV news content to examine the representation of older persons. The results complemented the desk review conducted by the secretariat. The roadmap recommendations will support the development of a national strategy on ageing which is being prepared in parallel and expected to be launched in October 2019. The roadmap itself is planned to be launched by September 2019.

22. The representative of Belarus thanked ECE for the support highlighting that expert advice was very valuable in assisting the preparation of the national strategy. The secretariat acknowledged the help of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in organizing the field missions, both in financial and practical terms, and praised the very good working relationship.

B. Brief report on other programme elements

1. Active Ageing Index and Stakeholder meeting in June 2019

23. Bureau members were updated about Active Ageing Index (AAI) project activities, including new research and upcoming events, such as the stakeholder meeting on 17 June in Brussels to which all members of the WGA have been invited. The use of AAI for monitoring and shaping national/subnational and local-level policies is broadening within and outside EU Member States. Recent examples include the second round of AAI calculations in the Republic of Moldova, ongoing/planned pilot studies at subnational level in Romania and Spain, planned calculation of the new round of AAI for Norway and possibly in Azerbaijan (following upon the request from the UNFPA country office).

24. The third phase of the AAI project will end on 31 August 2019. The European Commission will most likely have the in-house capacity to host the AAI visualisation tool that is currently being developed. In response to the question by the Bureau on what funds would be needed to maintain and update the AAI after the project is completed, the secretariat informed that at a minimum funds are needed to hire a part-time assistant or a consultant to update the calculations, particularly in the run up to the next MIPAA review which preferably would draw on AAI indicators. Bureau members were informed that there is interest in working with the index from non-EU countries but there are no funds available.

2. Generations and Gender Programme

25. The secretariat provided an update on the Generations and Gender programme. In 2020-2022, some 15 countries are planning data collection which would make comparative research more pertinent time-wise. Latvia and Kazakhstan have completed the fielding of the survey in 2019 and preparations are ongoing in the Republic of Moldova. With data collected over the same time period in a larger number of countries, the relevance of the GGP for international comparisons will be further enhanced.

3. Policy Brief No. 22 on Informal Carers

26. The draft Policy Brief No. 22 was presented to the Bureau by the authoring team at the European Centre on Social Welfare Policy and Research in Vienna that had volunteered to develop the brief.

27. Bureau members provided a number of comments for consideration. The Bureau agreed on the proposed title “The challenging roles of informal carers” and that written comments should be submitted by Friday, 17 May. A revised version of the policy brief would again be circulated to the Bureau before finalization. It is planned to finalize the brief by the summer to ensure that it will be available in print format well in advance for the WGA meeting and policy seminar in November.

VII. Communication activities about WGA work, plans for the 1st October – celebrating the International Day of Older Persons

28. The secretariat provided a brief update on communication activities and the Bureau discussed possible activities to celebrate the International day of older persons on 1 October 2019. So far, there are no concrete plans. Internationally, the provisional theme is “The journey to age equality”. At the inter-agency meeting on ageing in Geneva in March 2019

there was a suggestion for ILO to organize this year's celebration on the theme of older workers, given that ILO celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2019. Policy Brief No.21 on combating ageism in the world of work could inform an event on this theme.

VIII. WGA representation at the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on 21-22 March & HLPF in July

29. The representative of France reported on the participation of members of the WGA (Austria, France and Germany) at the roundtable on SDG4 on "learning without limits" at the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in the ECE region. There is no information yet as to whether members of the WGA will participate in the HLPF in New York.

IX. Round up of the first day

30. The Chair summarized the discussion and decisions taken during the first day of the meeting.

X. Report on population ageing relevant outcomes of:

A. The 57th session of the Commission on Social Development (CSD)

31. The secretariat briefed the Bureau on the 57th session of CSD which focused on addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies and adopted the related draft resolution that in a number of instances addressed the social protection aspect of older persons. The panel on emerging issues "The empowerment of people affected by natural and human-made disasters to reduce inequality: Addressing the differential impact on persons with disabilities, older persons and youth" looked into some specific elements related to ageing and older population. According to the preliminary programme of the 58th session of the Commission on Social Development, the item on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing will be included.

B. The 52nd session of the Commission on Population and Development

32. The secretariat informed Bureau members about the high-level panel at which chairs of the regional review conferences shared region-specific perspectives on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. Belarus, represented by the Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister, spoke on behalf of the ECE region. The high-level panel was very well received, following a new interactive format.

33. After three years of not being able to agree on a resolution, member States this year negotiated a declaration that was strongly supported by Canada, the Netherlands, and the UK among other countries in the ECE region.

C. Tenth session of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing; inputs for new report of Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Older Persons

34. The Vice-chair (Norway) and the representative of France briefed the Bureau about the Tenth session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA). Two Focus areas

were discussed: education, training, lifelong learning and capacity building on the one hand and social protection and social security (including social protection floors) on the other hand.

35. At the tenth session, the ECE Working Group on Ageing was introduced by the Vice-Chair to the members of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing. The Bureau pointed out the need to enhance mutual awareness of each other's activities between the two groups and suggested that member States participating in the annual sessions should take the opportunity to inform on WGA.

36. The topics for the eleventh meeting in 2020 will be on "access to justice" and "the tight of Work and access to the labour market".

37. The thematic report of the Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by older persons to the Human Rights Council in September 2019 will be on the human rights of older persons in emergency situations.

D. Other major international initiatives

38. The secretariat briefed the Bureau on the ageing-related activities and initiatives of other international organizations based on the outcomes of the Geneva inter-agency meeting on ageing held on 13 March 2019 with the participation of representatives of the ILO, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNFPA, WHO, and the NGO Committee on Ageing and the World Bank to provide updates on current activities and upcoming events on ageing.

39. The main focus of WHO ageing-focused activities is the implementation of the Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health (2016-2020), which includes preparation for a Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020-2030). New activities include a project gathering data on healthy ageing from 94 countries as well as work conducted on the ethics of healthy ageing policies.

40. ILO will hold a conference on the demographic changes in the world of work in January 2020 which will be based on a life-cycle approach.

E. Proposals for the Working Group to take part in various civil society and academic initiatives

41. The representative of France proposed to develop a Policy Brief on Women and Old Age in collaboration with the European Commission's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. The latter is currently preparing an Opinion on Women and Age (led by Italy). This could be a timely contribution by WGA to the Beijing +25 Regional Review Meeting (29-30 October 2019, Geneva) assessing progress on women's empowerment and gender equality in the region. It was agreed that the representative of France would set up a call with the secretariat, the Chair of the Advisory Committee and the European Commission to further explore potential collaboration.

42. The secretariat was approached by secretariat of the ISO Technical Committee #314 to collaborate on the development of ageing-related standards. The Bureau agreed that the secretariat should request further information about this initiative.

XI. Main elements of the work programme for 2020 – policy briefs, policy seminar, publications

43. The secretariat shared initial ideas on the forthcoming policy brief on ageing in urban environments. It was proposed, and the Bureau agreed, to tailor the discussion to address SDG 11 which is to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, referring specifically to safe and affordable housing (Target 11.1); safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all (Target 11.2); and universal access to safe, inclusive, accessible green and public spaces (Target 11.7). Furthermore, this policy brief will contribute to the ECE Nexus area Smart and Sustainable Cities for All Ages through which connections could be enhanced with the work of ECE on housing and land management as well as transport. In the discussion, the representative from the Czech Republic recommended to also address aspects of climate change adaptations by cities and how these measures take the needs of older persons into account.

44. The government of Kazakhstan has requested ECE to prepare a roadmap for mainstreaming ageing for which work is planned to commence in the second half of 2019 and 2020.

45. The topic for the Policy Seminar on Ageing in 2020 still needs to be chosen. The secretariat proposed to consider mainstreaming ageing as it would coincide with the completion of the new guidelines on mainstreaming ageing and could provide an opportunity for building capacity in areas covered.

XII. Individual member States' initiatives and capacity building, events

46. The representative from Norway briefly shared progress on implementing Norway's cross-sectoral strategy for an age-friendly Norway, a new reform on long-term care and plans to establish an ombudsperson in 2020.

47. The representative from Italy updated the Bureau on the launch of a project by the Department for Families of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers aimed at establishing a national coordination committee on active ageing policies with the participation of national, regional and local public institutions and stakeholders. The aim of this project is to favour a process of mutual learning and mainstreaming of active ageing, also making use of the AAI. The project is expected to contribute to develop a bottom-up approach for the preparation of the next report on the national implementation of MIPAA/RIS.

48. The representative from the Czech Republic shared follow-up on the draft national strategy on ageing which was approved by the line ministry and has currently been stalled following comments received during the inter-departmental consultation.

XIII. Draft agenda of the twelfth meeting of the Working Group on Ageing (18-19 November 2019)

49. Bureau members reviewed the draft agenda for the twelfth meeting of WGA. The secretariat reminded that a new Bureau will have to be elected in 2019. The call for nominations will be issued in early September.

50. It was agreed that under Item 3 (c) on the Bureau report, time would be allocated to discussing how awareness on MIPAA/RIS could be raised by member States by contributing

to the substantive discussions in the OEWGA for example by contributing to panel discussions.

51. Members of the Bureau agreed to invite Professor Liat Aylon (Israel) for an expert lecture on ageism under Item 4 “New and ongoing initiatives in the area of ageing and the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

52. Bureau members from Italy and Norway volunteered to share information about national policy measures under Item 5 “Country experiences: aligning policy measures and strategies on ageing with the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration”.

53. Feedback received after the last meeting of the Working Group on Ageing proposed to spend less time on reporting on past activities and to allocate more time to experience sharing and discussing new and planned joint activities, which will be taken into account for scheduling agenda items of the 12th meeting.

54. The secretariat informed that preparations for the next review and appraisal cycle for MIPAA/RIS should commence with the WGA discussing the modalities for the next review, including the guidelines for reporting by member States. The WGA should also consider Austria’s suggestion put forward at the tenth Bureau meeting to cover progress over all 20 years of the MIPAA/RIS during the forthcoming review.

XIV. Other business

55. Bureau members discussed the proposal by Austria that WGA could participate and organize a side event at the Human Rights Commission in June in Geneva. Unfortunately, neither the Chair (Portugal) nor Vice-Chair (Norway) would be able to participate and commit to organizing such event.

56. Germany is going to bring to the Palais des Nations the travelling exhibition “What’s old anyway?” in November and is planning to hold its vernissage during the twelfth meeting of WGA.

XV. Decisions, summary and closing of the meeting

57. The secretariat summarized the main elements of the discussions and reviewed all decisions and action points. The Bureau adopted the draft decisions.

58. The Vice-Chair and the secretariat thanked the host country representative for hosting the meeting and for their hospitality. The Chair closed the meeting.

59. The next ad-hoc Bureau meeting will take place in Geneva on 18 November 2019 at 08:30. The room number will be communicated closer to the time.