

**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

WORKING GROUP ON AGEING

First meeting
Geneva, 1–2 December 2008
Item 5b of the provisional agenda

DRAFT POLICY BRIEF ON MAINSTREAMING AGEING

Summary

This document prepared by the secretariat contains a draft example of a policy brief on ageing as proposed in the draft programme of work (ECE/WG.1/2008/3, paras 4 and 5). It is envisaged to design a series of policy briefs to provide guidance to policy-makers on strategic options addressing the consequences of population ageing. The draft brief at hand is an example of how such documents may look like. It has been dedicated to mainstreaming ageing as an overarching, holistic approach. Against the background of recent demographic developments and the policy challenges which these are posing, it will be shown how mainstreaming ageing can be a viable strategy. This brief explains the concept of mainstreaming and shows tools and techniques to implement it. A checklist is provided to facilitate planning concrete actions for mainstreaming ageing. Based on feedback received to this first example, policy briefs on other topics will follow, outlining strategies and approaches in different areas.

Rationale

The Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) provides the policy framework for ageing-related actions in UNECE member States. The commitments of MIPAA/RIS need to be translated into concrete activities adapted to country-specific situations. To support this process, a series of policy briefs is proposed for providing easy access to information on the state of the art of policy discourse and for presenting it to a broad audience, including policymakers. It is proposed that these briefs include examples of good practice from which other countries can learn.

Many good examples can be reported in specific areas of MIPAA/RIS commitments. Those on the commitment *to mainstream ageing across all policy fields* are relatively less frequent as it may appear more demanding to translate such an overarching commitment into concrete action. At the same time, experience in domains other than ageing, for example gender issues, has shown that mainstreaming is indeed a promising approach that warrants enhanced consideration. The secretariat therefore chose mainstreaming for the topic of this draft example.

It is expected that the Working Group will discuss, referring to this example, the format and content of policy briefs to be included in its work programme, with the objective to maximize their usefulness for implementing MIPAA/RIS in member States. In this connection, it can be helpful if Working Group members bring forward other examples of national implementation that could be included in such briefs.

Policy Brief

Mainstreaming Ageing

To mainstream ageing in all policy fields with the aim of bringing societies and economies into harmony with demographic change to achieve a society for all ages (Commitment 1 of the UNECE strategy on ageing)

Population ageing entails important and far-reaching implications across all spheres of society. Ageing-related issues therefore need to be integrated into all policy fields in order to bring societies and economies in harmony with demographic change. This policy brief looks at how governments can do this and provides selected examples. It also addresses the ways in which older persons can be involved in designing, implementing and evaluating ageing-related policies and programmes.

Challenging context: ageing

Populations in Europe and North America are ageing, but most find themselves still in the stage of the so-called demographic bonus, a situation when working-age adults make up the largest share of population and the share of dependent children and older adults is relatively small. This situation is about to end soon in many countries as the large generations are approaching retirement age and life expectancy is increasing further. This requires adjustments in many policy areas.

Suggested strategy: mainstreaming

Mainstreaming ageing is a policy strategy directed towards integrating ageing issues into all relevant policy fields on all levels. While relying on evidence-based policies, Governments should involve other stakeholders and target groups in the policymaking process. This can be achieved through a participatory approach.

Expected result: integration

Mainstreaming helps to ensure better integration of older persons' needs into the policymaking process. This would allow older persons contribute more to society, communities and families, which should eventually help to bring economies and societies in harmony with demographic change.

Mainstreaming Objectives	Policy Toolkit		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use holistic approach to ageing mainstreaming across several policy fields, including economic, labor, budgetary, health care, educational, housing, social, cultural, family, environmental, transport, security and cultural matters 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include all relevant stakeholders in decision making and legislative process 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevent age discrimination 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure fairness and access to services for all 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise public awareness for ageing related issues 			

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Checklist

Demographic change

As the world population is passing through the demographic transition – the transformation of a population characterized by large families and short lives into a population of small families and long lives – the distinctive trait of this century is going to be ageing, a process where the share of older individuals in the population is increasing.

Ageing in the UNECE region

The demographic transition is universal across the world, however, its timing varies greatly between and within world regions, and so does the onset and pace of ageing. Populations in Europe and North America are ageing, but most find themselves still in the stage of the so-called demographic bonus, a situation when working-age adults make up the largest share of population and the share of dependent children and older adults is relatively small. This situation will end as the large generations born during the baby boom are retiring and the life expectancy is increasing further. In Europe, there are now 4.4 persons in the working age per one person 65 or older. By 2025 there will be 3.1 and by 2050 only 2.1¹.

Diversity

Although many Eastern European countries are currently witnessing stagnation of life expectancy and even its decline among men, they are also ageing rapidly as a result of past fertility decline. Several countries of Central Asia are only coming to the stage of demographic bonus with their large young cohorts are entering the labour force. Their populations are ageing, too, but their age structure is currently still much younger than in other sub-regions of the UNECE. Their challenge is to make good use of the demographically advantageous period that they are entering.

Consequences

Ageing represents a triumph of medical, social, and economic advances, it also presents challenges existing systems of social support and affects virtually all domains of society.

In the context of longer lives, the meaning of conventional and legally set age-markers of life-course transitions such as the age of retirement at 65 (a legal standard in many UNECE countries) is changing as the proportion of the population surviving long past that age is increasing. Thus, if current retirement practices continue more and more people will spend about a quarter of their adult life in retirement. Will these people find new occupations to remain active and to be helpful to others? Will they be treated equally? What will their economic status be? How will their needs change? All these and other issues are important when thinking about the consequences of ageing.

¹ United Nations, World Population Prospects, 2006 Revision. New York, 2007. Europe in these statistics includes the whole of Russian Federation, excludes Caucasus and Central Asia.

Mainstreaming ageing

Older persons make important contributions to society, to their communities and families. To ensure that older persons can remain active and independent for as long as possible, policies supporting their social and economic integration in all spheres of society are necessary. To achieve this complex goal, a holistic approach whereby ageing is integrated in all policy fields is most promising.

Concept

Mainstreaming ageing is a strategy, a process and a multi-dimensional effort of integrating ageing issues into all policy fields and all policy levels. Ultimately, the objective is to achieve a more equitable development within a society for the benefit of *all* social groups. Successful mainstreaming includes all relevant stakeholders into decision-making to ensure older persons' needs are met in all policy fields. Mainstreaming can be seen as an important tool for achieving a society for all ages.

Holistic approach

A holistic approach in this context means that ageing-related concerns are systematically considered in all areas and levels of policymaking. A national action plan on ageing or a similar strategy document may provide an overall framework of action. It should include the identified national priorities concerning older persons, suggested procedures and concrete targets for developing mainstreaming efforts at all levels. Furthermore, the strategic framework should entail the special needs of vulnerable groups, for example older migrants. It should also reflect internationally agreed policy standards, such as the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA/RIS). To implement such a strategic framework, its importance needs to be recognized by a country's political leadership.

“Bien vieillir”: avenues towards good ageing in France

An important area of mainstreaming is development of national plans and policy frameworks. The French Plan Bien Vieillir (Good Ageing) for 2007-2009 is one such case. Adopted jointly by several ministries, the Plan pursues a holistic approach on good ageing while at the same time focusing on certain priority areas. It promotes healthy living and advocates prevention, seeks to improve the environment and quality of life for older persons (incl. infrastructure, technical aids, city development), advocates older persons' participation in social and cultural life and promotes intergenerational solidarity.

In the field of health, the Plan suggests activities for preventing accidents in daily life, dealing with hearing and visual disability, cancer or dental problems. Furthermore, it foresees a comprehensive campaign to communicate incentives for older persons to adopt habits that consciously take into account a healthy diet, physical activity, healthy sleeping, good use of medicine and the general frame of mind. To promote older persons' integration in social life, the event Semaine Bleue (Blue Week) sensitizes the public to the contribution of older persons to economic, social and cultural life. The Plan suggests intergenerational living arrangements to improve older persons' quality of life and promote intergenerational solidarity. Research and innovation are encouraged by offering research grants for innovative ideas of how to achieve good ageing. The Plan also foresees experimental activities in providing special living arrangements for ageing homeless people and older migrants. Finally, the Plan makes special provisions regarding the role of the local level and takes into account the international dimension through participation in EU level projects on ageing.

Sources: Ministère de la Santé et des Solidarités Ministère délégué à la Sécurité Sociale, aux Personnes âgées, aux Personnes handicapées et à la Famille, Ministère de la Jeunesse, des Sports et de la Vie associative, PLAN NATIONAL “BIEN VIEILLIR” 2007 – 2009, http://www.travail-solidarite.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/presentation_plan-3.pdf; Questionnaire pour le rapport de suivi de la mise en œuvre du plan international de Madrid (2002), http://www.unece.org/pau/_docs/age/2007/AGE_2007_MiCA07_CntrRprtFRA_f.pdf

Laws, policies and programmes

Laws, policies and programmes are important tools to achieve a holistic approach in mainstreaming ageing. Existing policies and programmes as well as laws and regulations should reflect adequately the concerns of persons of all ages and a general framework of non-discrimination should be provided. This means, that the concerns of older persons should not be seen in isolation or in competition with other social groups.

The implications for older persons of any planned legislation, policy or programme, should be systematically assessed by way of an impact analysis. Guidelines may help to screen new laws policies or programmes for their relevance on ageing as well as on how they implement identified national priorities on ageing and indicators of success. New laws, policies and programmes should be streamlined internationally agreed standards, based on the MIPAA/RIS framework.

Equal Treatment Authority in Hungary scrutinizes laws and regulations

An Equal Treatment Authority was set up in December 2004 by the Hungarian Government. It is an independent organization with nationwide authority, which verifies the compliance with the law of equality and non-discrimination. The Authority deals with complaints related to direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, segregation, sexual harassment and retribution. Once the Authority receives a complaint, it will conduct an administrative procedure to examine if the principle of equal treatment has been violated. If this is the case, the authority takes a decision to apply sanctions specified by law.

The Authority received more than 800 complaints in 2006 most of them concerning age and ethnic discrimination at work.

Source: Country Report Hungary 2007, <http://eqyenlobanasmod.hu>

Institutional setting

The institutional setting is another important tool to achieve a holistic approach to mainstreaming ageing. It should be designed so that older persons in all policy areas are considered. National consultative bodies on ageing issues, councils, boards or commissions, should ensure that older persons are represented in decision-making. In addition, other relevant stakeholders, NGOs, the private sector and trade unions should also be institutionally prescribed. An office on age discrimination or an ombudsperson could assist in overseeing the adherence to non-discriminatory framework.

Interdepartmental or interagency working groups, councils or commissions, or assigned focal points on ageing could help to achieve streamlining of policies and reduce duplication. Such coordination is necessary on the national level, but also on the regional and municipal levels to the extent that policy decisions are made on those levels.

National budget

National budget reflects in monetary terms the government's commitment to specific policy areas and is therefore another indicator of and instrument for achieving a holistic approach to mainstreaming ageing. The budget should be systematically evaluated as to the benefits of different age groups. With respect to ageing-related actions, priorities would need to be established so that the limited resources can be directed to cost-effective interventions to areas where they are likely to have a significant impact. Within a finance ministry, a focal point or an office could be entrusted with mainstreaming ageing. Consideration should also be given to the tax code and its influence on people of different age.

Data collection

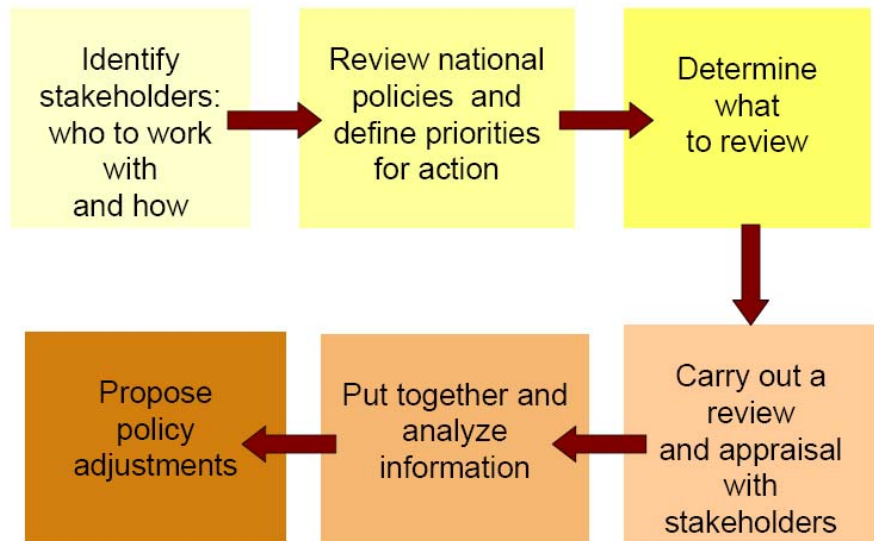
An evidence-based policy framework requires the availability of data disaggregated by age. Such data can be collected through censuses, civil registration, household surveys. Participatory methods for collecting qualitative information, such as focus group discussions, should complement the quantitative data collection methods. Available academic infrastructure should be actively included or built up.

Awareness-raising

Issues concerning ageing and older persons may suffer from a lack of attention and resources. Advocacy campaigns may help to sensitize the public to concerns and conditions of older persons. Advocacy campaigns should help to overcome negative stereotypes and ageism. Newly collected data should be disseminated to contribute to the overall knowledge of society regarding ageing and older persons, thus contributing to overall awareness-raising.

Participatory approach

Mainstreaming ageing is connected with a participatory approach. Bottom-up participatory data collection should inform policy-making as well as monitoring and evaluation. Beside the information it provides, another important purpose of the participatory approach is to ensure that older persons get involved in the policymaking process on issues that concern them, including policy design, implementation and evaluation. In that sense, mainstreaming ageing represents a shift from developing *policies for* older persons towards the *inclusion of* older persons in the policy-making process, taking into account their views and opinions when developing and implementing policies that affect them. The participatory approach may include the following steps:



Source: Adapted from: United Nations. *Guidelines for Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing*. New York, 2006, p. 18.

Identifying stakeholder groups in Lithuania shows that participatory approach works

During the development of participatory research with older persons in Lithuania (2000), a meeting was organized for a group of older persons, leaders of older persons' organizations, service providers and local government officials. At the meeting, participants drew up a list of the stakeholder groups they wanted to have participated in the research and specified the categories of older persons they needed to involve. For example, older men and women aged 80 years or over, older persons in rural and in urban areas, older persons living with their families or without them or older persons in institutions.

Note: This exercise was carried out under the auspices of the Elderly Woman's Activity Centre, Kaunas, Lithuania.

Source: *Guidelines for Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing*, UN DESA, NY, 2006. P. 18

Performance assessment

The process of mainstreaming would need to be monitored and evaluated as to progress made in different areas. Developing benchmarks against which potential progress could be measured, and introducing appropriate indicators addressing the results and progress of mainstreaming are important. Performance indicators should be both quantitative and qualitative. They can attempt to measure progress of individual well-being of older persons (quality of life indicators) and the success of overall policy. Progress should be reviewed periodically and outcomes should be acted upon accordingly. In case outcome is lagging behind, efforts should be made to identify the root cause as a prerequisite for taking action.

LinkAge Pilots in the UK increase effectiveness of services

Eight LinkAge Plus pilots are bringing together local authorities and their partners in government, health and the voluntary and community sector, to improve access to information and services for older persons. The pilots test different methods of providing information to individual older persons, service providers and other professionals who work with older persons to identify and meet their needs by bringing together local information and services. The pilots have worked in different local authorities, with voluntary and community sector partners and in some cases with healthcare providers, to increase the number of points of access to information and services and to a range of activities to promote wellbeing and independence. In some case this has led to a reduction in duplication, better targeting and improved cost-effectiveness.

Source: Department for Work and Pensions, UK, <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/pressreleases/2008/jun/pens073-240608.asp>

International cooperation

Preparation of integrated national policy frameworks on ageing can benefit greatly from international cooperation facilitated by international agencies. The Madrid Plan specifies that the United Nations Commission for Social Development is responsible for the follow up and appraisal of its worldwide implementation, with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) as the focal point on ageing in the UN system. The UN regional commissions, of which UNECE is one, are turning the overall provisions into regional action plans (the Regional Implementation Strategy in the UNECE region) and assist national institutions in implementing and monitoring actions on ageing.

UNECE is providing a platform for policy discussion on ageing-related issues. Recent events discussing mainstreaming ageing include the Ministerial Conference on Ageing (León, Spain, 2007) and the Conference on How Generations and Gender Shape Demographic Change (Geneva, 2008). Presented materials are available at the UNECE Population web site www.unece.org/pau. Furthermore, with its Generations and Gender Programme (GGP), UNECE contributes to the knowledge base for evidence-based policymaking.

Mainstreaming ageing: Checklist			
Mainstreaming tools and techniques	Purpose	Tools	Participants
The strategic framework	Systematic consideration of ageing-related concerns in all areas and all levels of policymaking. Provide an overall framework of action	National action plan on ageing, a similar strategic document or a set of linked documents covering the area.	Government, interagency bodies, other relevant stakeholders
Laws, policies and programmes	Evaluation of existing laws and policies, making necessary adjustments with respect to needs and concerns of older persons	Guidelines on mainstreaming ageing concerns into new laws, policies and programmes. Impact analysis regarding ageing and older persons	Legislative bodies, government agencies, consultative bodies on ageing.
Institutional setting	Ensure exchange between departments and agencies, to avoid duplication and achieve coordination. Achieve a clear distribution of tasks. Ensure representation of older persons and other relevant stakeholders in decision-making. Adherence to a non-discriminatory framework	Interdepartmental or interagency working groups, councils or commissions, national consultative bodies, focal point on ageing, office on age discrimination or ombudsperson	Government national, regional, municipal, older persons' representatives, NGOs, private sector, trade unions
National budget	Ensure annually that the budget process takes the concerns and problems of older persons into consideration. Increased equity in national resource allocation. Fair and progressive tax system.	Budget. Tax system.	Finance ministry. A unit or focal point on mainstreaming ageing may be established.
Data collection and analysis	Availability of socio-economic data about ageing and older persons as knowledge base for policymaking. Involvement of all stakeholders in the policymaking process through participatory methods	Quantitative and qualitative data collection: census, civil registration, surveys, focus group discussions.	Governments. Research institutions. NGOs.
Awareness raising, advocacy and education	Increased visibility of the topic. Sensitization of the public to concerns and conditions of older persons. Overcoming negative stereotypes.	Dissemination of data. Advocacy campaign on local, provincial and national level	Representatives of groups of older persons, civil society and faith-based organizations, educational and research institutions, media, political parties, government officials.
Participatory approach	Ensure that older persons are involved in all phases of the policy process on ageing, that policy-making corresponds to the needs of the target groups and that older persons have ownership for the policies that affect them To shift away from developing <i>policies for</i> older persons towards the <i>inclusion of</i> older persons in the policymaking process	Bottom-up participatory approach in data collection, monitoring and evaluation. To ask for views and opinions of older persons	Target groups of policies, older persons, government.

Mainstreaming ageing: Checklist			
Mainstreaming tools and techniques	Purpose	Tools	Participants
Performance assessment	Development of benchmarks in relation to which to measure progress. Introducing appropriate indicators to understand progress and ensure continuous accountability	Quantitative and qualitative performance indicators	All actors and donors
Inclusion of ageing into all policy fields	Integrate ageing agenda into all policy fields on all levels Economy and labour markets, health sector and social protection system and education system all accommodate the needs of older persons	Economic, social, health and education policies	Government, in consultation with relevant stakeholders
International collaboration	International coordination of multi-level efforts in policies and practices. Learning from each other.	Exchange on good practices. Capacity development and training of focal points on ageing and all staff working on social inclusion. Technical cooperation provided by UN	Governments, NGOs, international organizations, donors

Partially based on Venne R, *Mainstreaming the concerns of older persons into the social development agenda*. Available at UN Programme on Ageing at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/documents/mainstreaming/positionpaper.pdf>.

Consulted and recommended sources

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The listed materials of the United Nations are available through the web site of the Programme on Ageing: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing>.