

VII. Main Conclusions and Recommendations of the Research Forum

We, the participants of the Research Forum, held on 5 November 2007 in León, Spain, would like to express our appreciation to the Kingdom of Spain for hosting and supporting the Research Forum preceding the 2007 UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing.

We wish to:

Point out that the León Ministerial Declaration stresses the fact that research is vital to the development of effective policies and programmes,

Underline that the Research Forum of León represents significant progress in different areas of research on ageing in the UNECE region,

Acknowledge the important role of the European Research Agenda on Ageing developed during the Fifth European Congress of Gerontology (Barcelona, Spain, 2003) in bridging the gap between policy and research and in providing a common framework for studies on ageing in the UNECE region,

Present our conclusions and recommendations as a discussion basis by the UNECE member States.

Measures recommended at the strategic level:

Strengthening cooperation among the policymakers, researchers, NGOs and the private sector;

Promoting the exchange of research and training, within and among the countries of the UNECE region, especially among the Eastern and Western countries of the region;

Establishing monitoring and assessing mechanisms for linking and adjusting future research and policies to the European Research Agenda on Ageing.

Measures recommended at the operational level:

Establishing a European Institute on Ageing and corresponding infrastructures, to work in close collaboration with the U.S. National Institute on Ageing and existing institutions in the UNECE

region (research, training, exchange, databank and information management).

Recognizing that Austria has supported the 1982 first World Assembly on Ageing as well as the current Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS), that Germany hosted the UNECE Ministerial Conference in 2002, and that Spain has not only hosted the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002, but has also been crucial for integrating research on ageing within the implementation process of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing by supporting the 2002 Valencia Forum and the 2007 León Research Forum.

In view of the above,

- (a) We suggest that the Spanish Government, with the support of other Governments, convene a committee to create a European Institute on Ageing, which would define its purpose, structure and management, and also update the European Research Agenda on Ageing to include the concern of the entire UNECE region.

Specifically, in order to better invest in efficient policy research programmes, we invite member States of the UNECE region to:

- (a) Encourage and enhance national and regional research and training programmes promoting the multidisciplinary approach;
- (b) Integrate East-West collaboration in the UNECE region;
- (c) Contribute to the exchange of research information, best practices and guidelines as well as the exchange of students, academics and professionals for pre- and post-grade education and training, together with the establishment of a clearing house on ageing;
- (d) Promote as research priority themes some of the following:
 - (i) Social exclusion, rights and participation of older persons in society;

- (ii) Data collection and analysis of poverty among the older population, and generation effects;
 - (iii) Economic standards and income transfer programmes; gender-related economies;
 - (iv) Sustainability and adequacy of social security systems in a world of migration;
 - (v) Caregivers, dependency and long-term care systems;
 - (vi) Active ageing; mobility and environment, quality of life and healthy lifestyles;
 - (vii) Lifelong prevention and promotion of physical, psychological, spiritual and social health;
 - (viii) Biotechnological and technological innovation transfer for older persons in a “long-life society”;
- (e) Training priorities should include lifelong learning and continuous education, strengthening initiatives such as universities and schools for Third Age, and even the Fourth Age, and including the issue of ageing at all levels of the compulsory education system, as well as in professional and university curricula;
- (f) Establishment of monitoring mechanisms for the implementation of the European Research Agenda on Ageing.

Reiterating that only a human rights-based approach and an ethical framework for research and its application can benefit older persons and a “long-life society”,

We urge Governments to systematically include in all international and European ethical guidelines a section on “Ethics of research with reference to older persons” (for example in the CIOMS biomedical ethical guideline, UNESCO bioethics documents, etc.)¹³, in collaboration with the

National Forum of Ethics Committees of the European Union and of other regions;

We urge member States to establish a stronger framework for the rights of older persons, as well as intergenerational legislation, taking into consideration the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, by (a) appointing a rapporteur at the Human Right Council on the neglect, abuse and ill treatment of older persons, and (b) establishing a working group, within the Human Rights Council, to draft a convention on the rights of older persons and to mainstream ageing into the agenda of the Council.

Finally, we believe that in order to implement these proposals, we should join our hands in pursuing the following tasks and projects:

- Convening a UNECE meeting of policymakers and researchers to identify measures for cooperation between research and policy development and for the consolidation of policy-related research on ageing
- Exploring the feasibility of establishing a European Institute on Ageing for the countries in the UNECE region
- Promoting and updating the European Research Agenda on Ageing, especially bearing in mind the concerns and priorities of the countries with economies in transition.

Research being essential to implementing fully and adequately the UNECE Regional Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the research community will lend its full support to the objectives of the León Ministerial Declaration. We look forward to strengthening research capacities on ageing in order to collaborate more fruitfully with policymakers.

As researchers we believe in the role of science as a service to humanity. Science can significantly improve the well-being of older persons and thus promote “a society for all ages”.

¹³ Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS): *International Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical Research Involving Human Subjects*; UNESCO: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization