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## III Summary of Contributions

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Expert Panel I - *Promoting longer working life and maintaining work ability*

Rapporteur: **Robert Anderson**, Head, Living Conditions and Quality of Life Unit, European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions, Ireland

Expert Panel II – *Promoting participation, social inclusion and non-discrimination of older persons*

Rapporteur: **Ella Libanova**, Director, Institute for Demography and Social Studies, Ukraine

Expert Panel III – *Creating an enabling environment for health, independence and ageing in dignity*

Rapporteur: **Saodat Kamalova**, Director, Central Asian Gerontological Centre, Tajikistan

Government and Civil Society Panel – *Stimulating intergenerational dialogue and solidarity between the generations: a shared responsibility*

Rapporteur: **Marja Vaarama**, Director, National Institute on Health and Welfare, Finland; Professor of Social Work and Social Gerontology, University of Lapland

Ministerial Panels : *Ensuring a society for all ages: promoting quality of life and active ageing*

Ministerial Panel I - *Focus on promoting longer working life and maintaining work ability and promoting participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older persons*

Rapporteur: **Andres Vikat**, Chief, Social and Demographic Statistics, UNECE

Ministerial Panel II - *Focus on promoting quality of life in older age and creating an enabling environment for health, independence and ageing in dignity*

Rapporteur: **Igor Tomeš**, Charles University, Czech Republic

### 1. PROMOTING LONGER WORKING LIFE AND MAINTAINING WORK ABILITY

#### *Expert Panel I*

The first expert panel discussion, on promoting longer working life and maintaining work ability, underlined the great diversity of cultures and demographics in the countries of the UNECE region. Canada and Kyrgyzstan are at geographical extremes, but both highlight the phenomenon of people working longer, beyond the age of 65 in some cases, because people want to and in other cases because there is no alternative. Working after State pension age is increasingly common in the EU for a majority of people because they want to spend some time in employment, but for a significant minority because they need the income – ever more so in the current economic crisis.

The contribution of workers over 65 years is not recognized in the traditional dependency ratio statistics, and this is just one reason that this measure is misleading. As the Chair of this panel argued, reports should look at other

ways to express economic dependency – as the European Commission has in its *White Paper on Pensions*.

#### **Societal attitudes need to change from negative to positive**

The keynote speaker and several other experts have referred to the problem of negative societal attitudes, to both older people and, specifically, older workers. This ageism is expressed in overall discrimination as well as views that older workers are less productive and less skilled while being more expensive. These negative stereotypes must be addressed by sound research as well as measures to increase awareness of the capacities and competences of the older workforce – information directed to employers and employees, but also the media and the general public.

### Employment opportunities need to be improved for older populations

Action to improve employment opportunities for workers as they age takes place in both the workplace and in public policies. The reform of social protection systems was illustrated by initiatives in Canada, Norway and Sweden, typically through changes in pension and tax regimes. The thorny issue of disability pensions as an alternative form of exit from the labour market was highlighted in Norway's experience as the primary route out of employment for workers in their 50s. As with unemployment for older workers, there appears to be little prospect of return to work from a disability pension. This draws attention to the need to address recruitment as well as the retention of older workers.

As the employers' representative has urged, measures in the labour market should complement social protection reforms to build a "flexicurity" approach. The workplace is the key setting for initiatives to improve work ability, and measures such as skills development, health promotion, reconciliation and work organization produce positive results for workers of all ages. Nevertheless, the reorganization of working times and procedures remains a challenge for companies, and support must be directed at employers, especially in smaller enterprises.

### Governments and employers need to encourage older workers to remain in employment

Workers need encouragement to remain in employment longer; this can simply involve positive reinforcement of the message that the worker is making an important contribution and the employer wants them to remain at work. However, the motivation to work longer usually demands making the job qualitatively more attractive and quantitatively more flexible. It may involve new roles and responsibilities; and there is, for example, growing evidence of successful transitions to tasks in mentoring and coaching younger workers.

### Working time flexibility is key

The issue of working time flexibility has become more pressing with the increasing proportion of women in the older workforce. The gender dimension was mentioned in the experts' presentations and they draw attention to the implications of an ageing population for both formal and informal welfare. For instance, Sweden has a well-developed formal care system but most care work is still done by families, particularly by women, many of whom are employed. The reconciliation of employment with unpaid care work is key to enabling longer working lives and should move up the policy agenda for both governments and social partners.

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## 2. PARTICIPATION, NON-DISCRIMINATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION OF OLDER PEOPLE

### Expert Panel II

The second expert panel, on promoting the participation, social inclusion and non-discrimination of older persons, highlighted the fact that population ageing has a deep impact on social development through educational institutions, the labour market, social protection, public health, long-term care and intergenerational relations. This shows the diversity of older people and ageing processes that should be adequately reflected in policy actions and measures. Active ageing is already a focus of modern political concepts in most UNECE Member States due to social changes as well as to the changing opportunities associated with long-term living communities. This includes opportunities for older people to continue working, to stay healthy longer, and to participate in public life, particularly through volunteering. Active ageing also prevents discrimination of older generations.

### Public and individual objectives in active ageing change throughout life

Emphasizing the life-course approach, the keynote speaker noted that early interventions, especially

through education, are most effective in enhancing the social participation of older people. At the same time, interventions are still effective and meaningful later in life as public and individual objectives of active ageing change throughout life. Lifelong learning and knowledge transfers between generations are crucial to enhancing the social inclusion of older people and to mutual understanding.

Active ageing in middle age is mainly associated with extending the period of economic activity and employment, whereas after retirement it is associated with active participation in volunteering and in political, social and community life. The experts agree that it is very important, especially in extreme old age, to ensure non-discriminatory access to social and health services. An active ageing policy aimed at safeguarding both a high quality of individual life and social welfare can be implemented by various means. Importantly, it must take into account all of the dimensions of the ageing process. Mass media has a significant role to play in how the diverse ways we age is portrayed to the public in order to better to combat ageism. The media can make the public

more aware of the contributions of older persons while highlighting the positive aspects of ageing. It should disseminate information about the fact that ageing is a natural phase in one's life cycle. It is very important to have older persons themselves involved in the planning and running of media programmes because they can be the best agents of social change.

### Gender differences are narrowing, which is influencing policy decisions

Another subject highlighted by the expert panel was how rising life expectancy among both men and women and the potential narrowing of gender differences can foster behavioural changes at any age, not just in old age, for instance increased activity of women in the labour market and increased participation of men at home. The continued expansion of age frames in education provides some beneficial effects that are observable within the lifespan of one generation. There are also various examples of contributions to active ageing in middle and older ages. The experts noted in particular the spreading of healthy lifestyles and increased encouragement to volunteer in UNECE Member States. Studies, such as *Active ageing and quality of life in old age*<sup>37</sup> confirm that increased volunteering activities often help improve health and facilitate social integration.

Active ageing policies require an adequate and tangible mental foundation and the transformation of social infrastructure, among other factors. Experts noted that various comparative studies<sup>38</sup> demonstrate that the expansion of a social support system, for instance through employment protection, pension systems, health care and lifelong education, enhance opportunities for active ageing and make them available to more older people. Governments can ensure that a comprehensive effect is achieved through the development of wide-ranging policies, thereby encouraging the participation and social inclusion of the older populations, which can help enhance their chances to actively participate in society.

### There is no one recipe for success

Given the very diverse needs and capabilities of older people, as well as their life goals and behavioural patterns, the experts agreed that there is not one universal recipe for a successful active ageing policy. There is a need to review and summarize the best practices of different countries and communities in the development and successful implementation of policies adapted to ageing issues. Participants in the panel

discussions reflected upon the theoretical issues linked to inclusion of the older populations into social life; they also gave various examples of successful practices in the countries of the region, and not only in the richest and most democratic ones. For example, the *Hear Me* project is targeting older people as part of a lifelong learning initiative of the European Union. This five country project (Denmark, England, Finland, the Netherlands and Spain) has developed and organized mentoring courses for older volunteers, matching them as mentors with youths who are at risk of dropping out of the education system in their country.

Knowledge and skills quickly become obsolete given that there are few training and retraining systems for older working-age people; this inevitably limits the opportunities of older people to find (or even to retain) a job. Therefore, the panellists repeatedly noted the importance of education, especially lifelong education, in order to secure competitive ability and demand for older people in labour markets.

Adequate health is, of course, a prerequisite for active participation in public life, including employment. Thus it is essential to maintain both physical and mental health in the older population. The experiences of countries in the region demonstrate that volunteering plays a special role in efforts to include older populations in social life. Volunteering fosters maximum use of the available capacity of both society and the individual, as can be seen in the Republic of Serbia's Red Cross programmes that recruit older volunteers and a network of NGOs working on self-assistance groups.

### Recognizing the rights and responsibilities of older people

The experts also underlined the fact that, in addition to the rights of older people, policies should also focus on their obligations, such as the need to maintain their health and their ability to work, to maintain professional and general knowledge, and to prevent and/or overcome a mentality of dependency and apathy. At the same time, the motivation to continue working or volunteering is directly associated with the qualitative attraction of such activities and the feeling of being of use.

To avoid all discrimination among any population groups, society must start with age discrimination. The panellists emphasized several times that it is essential that governments, both central and local, interact with civil society institutions. This is vital to avoiding any and all manifestations of intergenerational conflict between those who have reached retirement and those who are entering the labour market, between pensioners receiving a pension from the pay-as-you-go pension system and those who make contributions for mandatory pension insurance. Ultimately, this determines the

<sup>37</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2012). Tesch-Römer, C. (2012). *Active ageing and quality of life in old age*. New York and Geneva: United Nations.

<sup>38</sup> See for example Wurm, S. (2010). "On the importance of a positive view on aging for physical exercise among middle-aged and older adults: Cross-sectional and longitudinal findings". *Psychology and Health*.

attitude of society, both towards the ageing process and towards older employees. It is insufficient to try to root out all forms of discrimination only through legislation; their manifestation through “everyday” discrimination by employers, colleagues, neighbours, etc. is equally and sometimes even more important and must be rooted out as well.

Everyone should be allowed to age with dignity. And this is not just about gainful employment. Expertise and social competence are as important in fostering social progress as labour productivity. Incredible as it may seem, the contribution of older generations to human, humanitarian and social capital is often significantly greater than the contribution of the equally large younger generations.

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### 3. CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR HEALTH, INDEPENDENCE AND AGEING IN DIGNITY

#### Expert Panel III

The third expert panel, addressing the topic of creating an enabling environment for health, independence and ageing in dignity, highlighted the experiences and capabilities of UNECE countries in the priority areas of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. It emphasized the importance of material and physical independence as crucial in terms of ensuring ageing in dignity.

#### Political will is needed to address ageing issues

The discussions focussed on the fact that the most important factor for the improvement of quality of life and active ageing is the availability of political will to address ageing issues in UNECE countries. Political will facilitates both an active lifestyle and its optimization through the preservation of health, participation in social life, the provision of social security, the prevention of disabilities, and the creation of an enabling environment for independent living. In addition, political will helps in the development of standards for the provision of quality services for health protection and the creation of appropriate conditions for older people conducive to their independence, even those with disabilities. Quality of life and the dignity of the older populations is also promoted through legal protection, care and adequate health services, as well as the provision of high-quality services through the training of social workers and persons involved in informal care.

#### The home environment is key

The keynote speaker noted the significance of the home environment: it comprises the place where a person lives, the environment surrounding the person, and the relationship in the family and beyond the family. It is also a place where people habitually receive care, and social and health services.

Older people often strive to live as they did when they were younger, yet at the same time they recognize that certain limitations emerge as they grow older. Therefore, the infrastructure that the older person is

dependent upon is of primary importance: it requires a comprehensive approach which takes into account the older person’s needs, especially physical needs.

Panellists agreed that the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing is encouraging, but the existing knowledge needed for its implementation is insufficient in terms of the complex interlinkages between what is available and what is required for housing and health. For instance, individual consultation is needed during the construction and provision of housing in order to make full use of technologies that could aid in maintaining the physical activity and mobility of an older person and which would also provide for reasonable social and health services depending on the type of housing.

Population ageing is an important issue for all UNECE countries, including the Russian Federation. To address it, the country adopted a *Concept of Demographic Policy in Russia until 2025* in 2007 and regional policies are being implemented through close contacts between public and business sectors. There are also a number of ongoing programmes that aim to provide older people with essential services, such as the *Panic Button* and *Social Taxi* programmes. The Senior Generation, a multi-stakeholder forum supported by the Russian Ministry of Health, is an important platform for experts from government, research institutions and community-based organizations, and actively involves older people as well. Such collaboration facilitates sharing of experience and knowledge both at the national and international levels.

Also in the Russian Federation, there is a strong focus on enabling a healthy environment through the ongoing *Accessible Environment* programme (2011-2015) aimed at adapting facilities and infrastructure to the needs of older and disabled people. Health service standards have been developed and are now operational and there are model apartments for older populations.

In Germany, conditions have been created for older people to maintain their health, independence,

economic security and dignity. The country's commission on portraits of ageing helps to promote a positive image of ageing by taking into account its various forms. It has also developed a policy on population ageing that is now being actively implemented, and the government runs services where people can get advice and receive responses to any question surrounding ageing.

In the United States, laws maintaining the health and economic security of older people are effective and support the independence and dignity of each person in old age. A home care system using informal assistants is well-established and the government supports these people in their initiative, which is very important to improvements in the quality of home care. The country has also developed a *National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy* which is a comprehensive plan to improve health at all ages. It covers strategies for quality health, clean air and water, safe work sites, and health foods.

In Estonia, the recognition that the provision of monetary support is not the most important element in ensuring health, quality of life, independence and the dignity of older people has gained momentum. The key element for active and quality longevity is the establishment of a well-functioning social services system for older

people. To address the issue, more than 40 electronically coordinated social services for older people are now provided in the country.

#### Health norms and standards are also important

The World Health Organization (WHO), as a guiding and coordinating organization in health sector, is responsible for setting health norms and standards and developing health research plans. The organization stresses issues related to the importance of staying healthy as a person becomes older, as well as the prevention of disabilities, along with the importance of arranging long-term care in old age, and the need for relevant scientific research.

#### Take into account tangible and intangible needs

Older people want to live the same way everyone else does. At this time of deep transformations in society, both the tangible and intangible needs of people, especially older populations, should be taken into account. Tangible needs as emphasized by panellists include housing, preservation of health, nutrition, economic support, health services, and lifelong education. Among intangible needs, the accent was put on psychological and emotional support, love and respect. In sum, the best results are achieved when such needs are addressed starting in early childhood and throughout the life course.

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## 4. STIMULATING INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE AND SOLIDARITY BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

### *Government and Civil Society Panel*

The Government and Civil Society panel discussion on the shared responsibility of stimulating intergenerational dialogue and solidarity between the generations emphasized that ageing is a great achievement in human development and can create a positive social transformation.

Ageing is often seen as a threat but focus should be on its positive side and the opportunities it creates. The active ageing concept and strategies have proven to be effective elements in efforts to adapt to demographic change and fiscal constraints. It is also in line with the dignity and rights of older persons. Intergenerational solidarity enables individuals to reach their full potential during various stages of their life course, from younger to older ages.

The panellists underscored that intergenerational solidarity is alive in the UNECE region but manifests itself differently at different societal levels and in different cultural contexts which in turn points to potential for

improvement. For example, Nordic countries in the region provide support to a high proportion of frail older persons based on a model of decentralized publicly provided home care services. Thus it is useful and highly policy-relevant to understand the nature of intergenerational solidarity at different societal levels — micro, meso and macro — and their interactions.

At the micro level, the role of family has been, is and will continue to be central. Mutual exchange of support and care between generations continues within Europe but takes different forms depending on the context. In Nordic countries, much focus and investment has been directed at public services and home care in order to enable older people to continue living in their own homes. In the South of Europe the role of the family is more central. In both of these contexts the share of older people living in institutional settings is the lowest in Europe (3.3 per cent). The assumption that public provisions would decrease the interest in family responsibilities seems to be invalid.

At the meso level, communities and civil society organizations play an important role. However, it must be asked: To what extent the community, NGOs and families can shoulder more responsibilities during times of crises when the public sector tends to cut services?

**The welfare state is a key instrument in the fair distribution of rights and responsibilities within and between generations**

At the macro level, panellists highlighted the need to redesign functional and functioning care regimes and pension systems. However, at the same time it is vitally important to take the gender dimension into consideration in order not to enforce gender inequalities. Similarly, policies should avoid solutions that are seen to be unfair to some age groups. Particularly, there should not be a conflict of interest between the young and the old due to policies that discriminate against either group in labour markets, taxation and other social concerns.

However, social sustainability depends on the readiness of all generations to act in a spirit of solidarity towards each other. Sustainable development is an agenda for equity within and between generations. Inequity threatens social cohesion and economic development. Economic development should not be evaluated solely on the basis of GDP growth, but by measures that include the sustainability of natural resources and pension systems.

The welfare state has been designed to distribute rights and responsibilities within and between generations in a way that is recognized as fair. This is the root of intergenerational solidarity. Both young and old people who are at risk of poverty are in need of social security and essential services, and have thus the same interest in defending a universal approach to social security and services. However, there tends to be a democracy deficit and the voices of the young and old are not heard properly.

**All direct and indirect age-based discrimination should be abolished**

Panellists stressed that some pension legislation includes forms of direct discrimination. Direct social discrimination and violation of the rights and dignity of older persons is also evident in some cases. Indirect discrimination results from environments, products and practices that are not adjusted to the needs of older people on an equal basis with other population groups. Designing age-friendly environments would benefit all generations.

In the case of youth there are several age-related directly discriminatory practices, for example age-specific minimum wages in the labour market. Indirect discrimination of youth takes place through the massive

unemployment and underemployment of young people, with no job now meaning no pension later. This situation is not conducive to intergenerational solidarity as youth feel their future is being stolen.

**The generation impacts of policies need to be evaluated (ex ante)**

The greying of our populations resulting from low birth rates and longer life expectancies will compel all countries in the region to re-examine many of their public policies, including guarantees for retirement, universal access to health care, access to higher education and training, equal access to employment for both men and women, and protection of the environment, as well as policies in many other domains.

**The welfare state is a key instrument in the fair distribution of rights and responsibilities within and between generations**

All UNECE countries should re-examine their public policies for their impact on the distribution of rights and responsibilities between generations. An intersectoral, intergenerational and holistic life-course approach is needed as a framework. For instance, older women are at high risk of poverty as they tend to have a shorter employment career because of family responsibilities during their life cycles. Pension reforms and other social protection system reforms must not enforce and worsen this tendency towards inequality.

**Positive welfare policies should be inclusive of all generations**

An integrated approach to ageing as a natural sequence of the life cycle requires a longer term, intergenerational perspective. The vision of an inclusive and equitable society for all ages implies policies and practices aimed at sharing responsibilities within and between generations through fair procedures.

**Social sustainability should be built through coalitions, dialogue and partnerships**

There are too few opportunities and systems for intergenerational dialogue. However, dialogue between generations alone is not enough. Innovative models for participation and intergenerational coalitions for joint action are needed. A fair and sustainable social contract between generations calls for both dialogue and concrete action.

**Action is needed now for a sustainable future**

Facilitating dialogue between generations is a necessity, but dialogue is not enough. Action is needed now to create coalitions for change towards a sustainable future.

## 5. MINISTERIAL PANELS - ENSURING A SOCIETY FOR ALL AGES: PROMOTING QUALITY OF LIFE AND ACTIVE AGEING

### Ministerial Panel I

**Focus on promoting longer working life and maintaining work ability and promoting participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older persons**

The discussions in the first Ministerial Panel, on promoting longer working life and maintaining work ability and promoting participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older persons, demonstrated the strong commitment of the countries represented (Armenia, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Lithuania and Slovakia) and the European Union to adapt their societies for all ages. While there are comprehensive programme documents at national and EU levels, the discussions centred mainly on concrete actions and their outcomes. It was noted that the future prosperity of our societies greatly depends on the success of promoting active ageing. All in all, there is wide recognition that active ageing policies bring benefits of to the individuals that they are targeting and to the societies as a whole.

#### **A comprehensive approach requires international coordination**

The keynote speech focused on the *2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations*, which is raising awareness among the general public and triggering action by policymakers and key stakeholders in EU Member States. It promotes active ageing in three areas — employment, participation in society, and living independently — and aims to highlight older people's untapped potential and the contribution they can make to society. The European Commission's follow-up activities to the *2012 European Year* include the development of a set of guiding principles for active ageing, the development of an active ageing index together with UNECE and the European Centre in Vienna, and from 2013 onwards, supporting the Member States directly in developing comprehensive active-ageing strategies.

A number of ministers on the panel emphasized the importance of an international framework to pursue a comprehensive approach to population ageing at the national level. For instance, with United Nations support and based on a broad range of ageing-related studies, Armenia has developed and adopted a national strategy and action plan on ageing and social protection of older persons. In Lithuania, the *Strategy of Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing* guides government policy, and in Bulgaria, actions are guided by long-term national strategies on demographic development and active ageing.

#### **Promoting a longer working life and maintaining work ability**

All panellists spoke about labour market policies that aim to encourage employees to work. The frequently mentioned policies include tax and other incentives to employers to employ older persons, opportunities for flexible transition from work to retirement, as well as raising the retirement age. Specifically, France highlighted its generation contract policy that motivates enterprises financially to keep older workers who tutor younger workers. The Bulgarian *Human Resource Development Operational Programme* has also involved older persons as mentors. The policy measures described also include legal provisions to prevent the layoff of pre-pension-age employees in Belarus.

Belarus, Canada, Lithuania and Slovakia also provide specific support to older people in finding a job. Lithuania is organizing subsidized employment or self-employment and supports local employment initiatives for older people.

Emphasis has been put on the importance of providing training to older workers that would allow them to maintain their employability. Lifelong learning is an important component in national strategies and action plans. Lithuania has elaborated EU structural support projects in this field.

Countries have taken steps to reform their pension systems to enhance their sustainability, for example by increasing required contributory periods, limiting early retirement options and increasing the retirement age. Canada has eliminated the mandatory retirement age, allowing those who wish to continue working to remain in the labour force. The Armenian pension reform introduced a savings component in the pension system.

Armenia and Belarus have made efforts in improving the income security of older citizens and preventing poverty. Countries where the pension system and social programmes provide good income security for senior citizens, such as Canada, still face the challenge of ensuring the sustainability of their pension and social security systems as the population continues to age.

Labour market policies and pension reforms have led to a reversal of the trend towards early retirement and to

some improvement in older workers' employment rates in the European Union. The *Targeted Initiative for Older Workers* in Canada has been particularly successful in increasing the employment levels of older workers.

### Promoting participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older persons

Most countries have adopted legislation prohibiting age-based discrimination. At the EU level, such legislation bans discrimination on the grounds of age in employment, vocational education and training. Age discrimination often appears coupled with discrimination on other grounds, such as gender, race or disability in particular, requiring efforts to enable persons with disabilities to take part in everyday life.

The European Commission is planning to present a *European Accessibility Act* to remove barriers in the

physical environment, transport and information and communications technologies affecting people with disabilities, and to improve access to goods and services for persons with disabilities and the older populations based on a "design for all" approach.

There are also efforts towards ensuring access to information by people of all ages in today's digital age. These have taken the form of providing training voucher schemes for those over 50, providing digital competence and foreign language training in Bulgaria, projects encouraging active Internet use by providing training and easy access to computers in libraries in Lithuania, as well as websites as a central resource for information and initiatives relating to seniors, their families, caregivers and service organizations in Canada.

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## Ministerial Panel II

### Focus on promoting quality of life in older age and creating an enabling environment for health, independence and ageing in dignity

The second Ministerial Panel focussed on promoting quality of life in older age and creating an enabling environment for health, independence and ageing in dignity. Ministers participating in this panel stressed that the five and ten year reviews of activities to implement the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS) have been an important part of countries' actions surrounding programmes on active ageing and there is support among UNECE countries to continue such reviews. The panellists noted that in the last five years, UNECE countries have made progress in addressing ageing: new legislation has been passed, policies have been adjusted and strategies, programmes, plans and projects have been adopted and are gradually being implemented.

### Rising longevity calls for a stronger focus on quality of life as people age

The notable increase in life expectancy in the region means that ever greater proportions of persons are living longer and generally in better health. Countries represented at this panel (Belgium, Germany, Liechtenstein, Netherlands, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Sweden, United States of America) therefore emphasized that ageing can no longer be seen solely through the angle of retirement and pension issues. The quality of life as people age has to be at the core.

In the Russian Federation, for instance, the recent trend of increasing longevity highlights the active role

of the State in an effort to preserve the health of the population, to prolong employment of older persons, to raise material wealth, to provide access to medical and social services, and to increase cultural and recreational potential and modern communication among seniors, all with a view of improving quality of life. The country is focusing on the development possibilities for seniors, the strengthening of social connectedness, and education in the "third age", including in the run-up to retirement.

Higher longevity calls for important changes in attitudes and social systems. Designing ageing-related policies means making active provisions for the future in the interest of all generations. It also means that society as a whole must attempt to address this by promoting more positive attitudes towards ageing.

### Promoting quality of life and active ageing

#### *Solidarity between generations is important*

There are many examples of good practices in promoting and strengthening multigenerational dialogue and of improving cooperation between youth organizations and older persons' organizations. Measures aimed at, inter alia, combating any form of prejudice, neglect, abuse and discrimination and promoting intergenerational activities are the main issues on which many strategies are focussed.

Learning in an intergenerational environment is a condition for the improvement of dialogue between



generations and in overcoming some prejudices. All stakeholders, including governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, the media and the general public must be part of this process. And they must address some of the main issues affecting older populations today, such as: the fact that in some countries the older populations are still being abused by those who are younger; that ageing women in many respects have problems that are different from men; that some governmental policies need to be modified to avoid unintentional discrimination.

Families in some UNECE countries are encouraged to support their aged members in a sustainable manner. Solidarity is being effectively promoted through the support of non-governmental organizations and volunteer work. For example, in Germany the government based its strategy of inclusion on a report produced by an independent committee in which all age groups were represented; the report has been submitted to the Parliament for further action.

Volunteering by all generations is efficiently supported by many governments. In some countries the value of joint volunteering by people of all ages was recognized. Intergenerational volunteering is effectively complemented by intragenerational volunteering of the aged, for example in Germany where 20 per cent of the volunteers are over 50 years of age. They provide support to younger people, including families with small children.

UNECE countries are also developing and implementing socially responsible, financially sound and sustainable strategies encompassing the needs, capacities and expectations of current and future generations and promoting equal opportunities for their self-determination. For example, in Germany the governmental report to Parliament revealed that over 60 per cent of the German population supports activities in favour of older persons in some manner; the value of the support has been estimated to represent €11 billion annually. The Russian Federation has a multi-functional public system of social services for older persons in which younger generations participate. Good practices were also reported by other speakers.

### *Learning – preparing for ageing*

One remaining problem is that most of the population does not prepare for ageing; older people do not always learn the new competencies necessary for prolonged employment (due to a lack of opportunity or will). Yet there are examples of effective educational campaigns that have enabled the prolongation of active participation in the labour market. For example, in the Russian Federation public employment services conduct special training programmes for older people. In Belgium and Germany, lifelong learning has been effectively promoted.

There has also been a focus on teaching older people about healthy, active ageing and introducing this theme into the curricula of all educational institutions.

The success of universities for the “third age” has been stressed in connection with good practices to promote the activity of older persons. These universities could potentially promote the employment of older persons; however, today they generally follow regular university programmes and do not train people for the labour market.

### **Creating an enabling environment for health, independence and ageing in dignity**

#### *Enhancing autonomous life of older people*

There is a relatively new trend in social policy aimed at enabling older persons to continue living for as long as possible in their own environment and community. Apart from the support of families to care for their ageing family members, this includes promoting housing facilities. For example, in Belgium effective housing programmes have been developed to promote innovative housing design aimed at adapting to the changing needs and functional abilities of persons as they age. In the United States, the *Community Living Initiative* was launched by the Secretary of Health and Human Services; the authority just created a new public organization — the Administration for Community Living. In the Russian Federation, the housing concerns of war veterans and widows of fallen soldiers are being solved under a special provision. In Liechtenstein, the government intends to unite all the care providers who focus on older persons and to develop public budget support for institutions providing care for older persons.

Attention has also been given to self-help arrangements of older persons for independent or assisted living. In the United States this includes hours of volunteer service. In Belgium and the Netherlands there is increasing participation of older persons in the management of care systems and institutions.

There are also good practices in affordable, high-quality care, ranging from arrangements for primary and community-based care to various forms of institutional care. The United States plans to further enhance the integration of acute care, long-term care and community-based services. In Sweden the government appointed a National Coordinator for Elderly Care. In Liechtenstein an independent council has been created and is financially supported by the government to provide information and support to older persons upon request.

#### *Health promotion – care and protection*

Health promotion, care and protection measures to ensure independent living and active participation are equally important. The United States has the *Affordable*

*Care Act of 2010*, as well as additional protections offered by the *Age Discrimination Act*, the *Age Discrimination in Employment Act*, the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, and most recently, the *Elder Justice Act*. Medicare is the national social insurance programme in the United States; it guarantees access to health insurance for Americans aged 65 and older and for younger people with disabilities. In the Russian Federation a new federal law to promote health protection was adopted in 2012. Preventive measures, early diagnosis and treatment, especially with regard to long-term care are also being taken up.

Sweden has analysed the older population's health care needs until 2050 and concluded that while their needs can indeed be met, society will need to adapt to make it happen. This means efforts to improve health and more efficient health care, commitments to research and development, and greater involvement of older people in the processes and the politics.

Dignity as a principal attitude in nursing and medical practice, including long-term and palliative care, is also increasingly important. In Sweden, dignity has been incorporated as a core value in the *Social Services Act*. In the United States, a *National Alzheimer's Project Act* has been developed. The problem of non-respect of dignity in care services providing health and social intuitions is also of concern.

Governments also need to enhance the right of the older populations to choose the manner in which their needs will be met. The free choice principle was introduced in Sweden in 2009; some 100 out of 290 municipalities have introduced the free choice system, in which some 900 providers participate, and another 60 are planning to do so. Some providers offer different languages and some cultural and religious competence.

The needs of the older populations will also require more trained staff. In Sweden a four-year training programme has been launched, and the government has included support for a three-year training programme for leaders in the care of older populations in the 2013 budget. By 2013 there will be 3.3 million people in Germany needing care, and there will not be sufficient professional staff to provide it.

### *Community and family life*

The situation of informal and formal carers is improving in some UNECE countries through training and dignified working conditions, including adequate remuneration; this has attracted migrant carers. The social consequences for older persons caused by emigration and immigration were discussed. This includes challenges faced by older persons when the young emigrate. Such emigration speeds up their dependency on government support. There are also problems connected with ageing migrants who have not imported with them from their country of origin sufficient means for their protection in old age.

Affordable and effective high-quality goods and services and improving mobility through age-friendly environments are also concerns. Important developments have been achieved in developing marketing focussed at older populations, which supports autonomy in an important manner. Innovative and user-friendly technical support for the general needs of the aged is also important.

Sweden and the Netherlands have developed effective systems for families caring for their older populations. In Germany, the government promoted legislation to harmonize family care with employment: employees may draw part-time leave for two years with 70 per cent of wages, with the understanding that after the two years the employee would work full-time with 75 per cent wages until the debt incurred during the two-year part-time leave was fully paid back.

### **Conclusion**

The panel called for recognition of the fact that older men and women continue to make important contributions to their communities in various ways, including performing non-paid care of younger and older family members, participating in volunteering, as well as cash and in-kind transfers to benefit younger members of their families and communities. The ability of older persons to live independently and remain autonomous is also an essential part of it. This recognition should be underpinned by dialogue between generations, solidarity between generations, combating discrimination, prejudice, neglect and abuse, as well as health promotion and disease prevention measures, continuum of care and support services and self-support arrangements to ensure independent living, and the support of family carers.