

Panel 1: Creating integrated approaches to mainstream ageing

Rapporteur's summary

Mainstreaming ageing is an important dimension and crucial aspect of the Madrid Plan of Action. The mainstreaming can be defined as a *strategy* and a *process* leading to a greater social integration of older persons and to the inclusion of ageing into all aspects of social, political, economic and cultural life. The inclusion of older persons in policy implementation and evaluation allows them to become full partners in development. Thus mainstreaming is also seen as a *policy tool*.

Mainstreaming is an integrating approach that pertinent to countries at different stages of their economic advancement and social development. Meanwhile, to mainstream ageing in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, additional efforts are required to overcome several limiting factors, such as low priority of ageing issues on the national policy agenda and, most significant, insufficient national capacity on ageing. Mainstreaming efforts are particularly necessary during the transitional periods, including demographic and socio-economic transitions currently under way in some parts of the UNECE Region.

At the same time, mainstreaming should not be seen as an attempt to create separate or new programmes where implementation becomes hindered by lack of resources. Rather, it should integrate ageing into existing and future development planning and include older persons in policy design, implementation and evaluation.

In the UNECE RIS, a specific commitment is made to mainstream ageing concerns into all policy fields with the aim of securing gender-sensitive and evidence-based integrated policies to bring societies and economies into harmony with demographic change. This approach applies equally to various sectors including health and social care, labour market, social protection and education, as well as economy as a whole.

The first cycle of the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing envisages that Member States focus their attention on two dimensions of their implementation measures: ageing-specific policies and ageing-mainstreaming efforts.

The essential pre-requisites of successful mainstreaming include well-founded knowledge, or evidence basis; political and public visibility of proposed policy measures; sufficient resources; monitoring and assessment of the mainstreaming process; multi-level and multi-sectoral character of policy measures; and collaboration of different stakeholders as well as coordination of their activities.

Mainstreaming ageing into policy debate and action has to be an all-inclusive process, with several policy areas having a particular relevance and high potential to achieve the mainstreaming objectives. These policy areas include education; employment; health and well-being; social protection; economy; and migration.

Mainstreaming should be undertaken at different levels. The traditional level of mainstreaming efforts is national policy development. Unfortunately, during the

first five years of the implementation of the UNECE RIS the mainstreaming efforts have not won the proper recognition in many countries of the Region. To succeed in mainstreaming, simultaneous actions have to be pursued by policy makers and social partners; by government and civil society; by organizations and enterprises; and by individuals progressing through a life course.

International organizations have an important role to play in integrating ageing issues into their programmes and projects and contributing to monitoring of the implementation of the UNECE RIS.

Meanwhile, mainstreaming should not be seen as a panacea for addressing all the issues related to population and individual ageing. There are also concerns that mainstreaming might lead to “erasing” of some ageing-related issues from national and international policy agenda. It is therefore important, while promoting mainstreaming, not to lose sight of the specific needs and expectations of older persons. Mainstreaming must not mean diminishing the funding of specific ageing-related programmes or reduce attention to the situation of older persons. A twin track approach to policy and programmes on ageing is required: to address older persons’ specific needs by designing ageing-specific measures, and, simultaneously, to foster mainstreaming as an integrative approach.

To generate appropriate place of and attention to the issues of ageing at the national and international development agenda a range of efforts are required such as advocacy, awareness raising, and public education in order to promote the conviction that a sensitive approach to mainstreaming the concerns of older persons will benefit *all* age groups within society.

Throughout the UNECE Region, Member States have accumulated valuable experience in mainstreaming ageing and concerns of older persons into their national policies and programmes. For instance, in Austria, national surveys have included data collection and analysis on the issues of inter-generational relations; media campaigns have been conducted to “rethink” the image and role of older persons in an Austrian society; and measures to postpone early retirement through awarding enterprises for supporting older persons’ employment have been introduced. A significant advancement has also been the inclusion of ageing issues into national social budget that has referred to older persons as a social capital.

Estonia puts a specific emphasis on the role of the national focal point on ageing in coordinating mainstreaming efforts. Particular attention has been paid to improving the image of older persons through a very successful project “share a picture of your grannies”.

In Serbia, issues of ageing have been incorporated into policy measures aimed at implementing national poverty eradication strategy; employment strategy and EU accession strategy. The concerns of older persons are now included, thanks to the advocacy campaigns by national NGOs, into national medium-term planning with corresponding budgetary provisions.