

UNECE Policy Webinar on Ageing

Older persons in emergency situations: lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic

Wednesday 18 November 2020, 10:00 – 16:30 | EN/RU | Online

Objective The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on the increased vulnerability of older persons in emergency situations, and uncovered shortcomings in disaster preparedness and response strategies to the pandemic globally. This Policy Webinar will provide an opportunity for members of the Standing Working Group on Ageing and other stakeholders to reflect on the first lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic as regards upholding the dignity and human rights of older persons in emergency situations. In particular, discussions will focus on access to essential goods and health and long-term care services, sensitivity to their needs and preferences, and ensuring that mental well-being and dignity of older persons are safeguarded.

While numerous measures to protect older persons have been implemented across the UNECE Region, they have sometimes also exacerbated social isolation or cut off older persons from needed support and services. The pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability of older persons, experiencing higher risk of death and severe illness from COVID-19, while also demonstrating significant inter-generational support and solidarity. However, the Region has at the same time witnessed cases of ageism, and worrying accounts of human rights violations affecting older persons, particularly with regard to access to health care and long-term care services.

Models of long-term care vary greatly depending on the setting within which they operate: residential facilities, daycare institutions, or community- and home-based settings. Ensuring that disaster risk management strategies, and critically, recovery measures, are inclusive of older persons represents an important challenge—one that requires an explicit understanding of how long-term care services are delivered and received across these unique settings.

The focus of this Policy Webinar centres on ageism, and long-term care in different settings within the context of COVID-19. In 2017, UNECE Member States adopted the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration, which prioritises a commitment to ensuring ageing with dignity by, inter alia, "raising quality standards for integrated social and long-term care and health services" as well as ensuring that "no law, policy or programme leaves room for discrimination of any kind". This Policy Webinar is designed to offer a platform for in-depth discussion of important lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic thus far within the UNECE Region, and to facilitate the exchange of experiences and ideas with a view toward "building back better".

Target Group The Policy Webinar is designed for national focal points on ageing, members of the Standing Working Group on Ageing as well as experts on long-term care systems and services, civil society representatives and other stakeholders.

Expected results Better understanding of the ageism experienced and the challenges and needs of long-term care service recipients and providers at all levels during the COVID-19 pandemic. New insights on inclusive policy measures to ensure that older persons' dignity and participation are embedded within disaster risk management strategies, and especially within COVID-19 pandemic recovery measures.

Provisional Agenda | UNECE Policy Webinar on Ageing | Session 1

Wednesday 18 November 2020, 10:00 – 12:30

10:00 – 10:40 Welcome and setting the scene

- **Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich**, Population Unit, UNECE
- **Manfred Huber**, World Health Organization / Europe
- **Adelina Comas-Herrera**, London School of Economics/ Care Policy and Evaluation Centre

In this opening session, an overview of COVID-19 and older persons in the UNECE region will be presented.

10:40 – 12:10 Ageism and COVID-19 in the UNECE Region

Moderator: **Alana Officer**, World Health Organization

- **Silvia Perel Levin**, NGO Committee on Ageing, Geneva (general overview)
- **Ruud Dirkse**, Netherlands (persons with dementia)
- **Erika Winkler**, Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Austria (ageism & community)

This session will provide an overview of the main **ageism-related challenges** faced by member States during the pandemic, a discussion of responses seen throughout the region, and important lessons learned that can be used going forward into the recovery phase. This session will provide the context within which the following two main sessions are situated.

12:10 – 12:30 Lessons learned: brief summary – moderator and UNECE

Lunch Break

Provisional Agenda | UNECE Policy Webinar on Ageing | Session 2

Wednesday 18 November 2020, 14:00 – 16:30

14:00 – 15:00 COVID-19 and older persons in residential care facilities

Moderator: **Karl Duff**, Department of Health, Ireland

- **Giovanni Lamura**, INRCA · Centre for Social and Economic Research on Ageing, Italy
- **Natasa Todorovic**, Red Cross of Serbia
- **Pia Pulkkinen**, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare
- **Jennifer Zelmer**, Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement

This session will provide an overview of the main challenges encountered in residential care facilities across the Region. The session will also dissect the different models of care homes in the Region, including public, private, and mixed-models. The session will also address the needs of the care workers themselves (PPE, mental health services, physical health, specialized training, immigration/visa needs for migrant care workers, older care workers, etc.) and incorporate a focus on the continuity of access to goods, other services, and social connection for older persons in long term care facilities.

15:00 – 16:00 Reaching out to older persons in need of care at home or in the community

Moderator: **Anne-Sophie Parent**

- **Assiya Akanova**, Director, Centre of Active Ageing in Almaty, Kazakhstan
- **Edmundo Martinho**, President of Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa, Portugal
- **Seán Moynihan**, CEO of ALONE, Ireland
- **Aliona Cretu**, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, Republic of Moldova
- **Yossi Heyman**, JDC Eshel, Israel

This session will provide an overview of the main challenges encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic in home- and community-based long-term care service provision. A focus here will be on areas of need for data/information, the importance of better understanding the challenges faced by those receiving these services and those who support them (including families, carers, transport services, and more). As in the previous session, issues of ensuring continuity of access to goods, other services, and care during disasters and on identifying good practices to implement for an inclusive recovery will be addressed.

16:00 -- 16:30 Wrap-up & closing remarks - moderators and UNECE