



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Département fédéral de l'intérieur DFI
Office fédéral des assurances sociales OFAS

UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing

15-17 June 2022, Roma, Italy

Side event sponsored by France, Italy and Switzerland,

16 June, 1:15 – 2:15 pm

Preventing the loss of autonomy: for a better cooperation on the issue of falls of senior citizens

Background

Older dependents (64 and over) represent 14.30% of the working population (15-64) worldwide (World Bank, 2021), and 26% in Europe and Central Asia.

Early prevention of the onset of frailty is a key variable in promoting the autonomy and improving the quality of life of older people. **Preventing an early decline in physical and mental capacities** as well as the **risk of social isolation** and **encouraging the shift towards homecare** make it possible to **overcome the risks of loss of autonomy and accidents, such as falls**, and their consequences on the health and dependency of the elderly.

Falls, whose prevalence and consequences increase with age, affect the older person in terms of **health, including mental health**, and lead to a decrease in mobility, a loss of self-confidence, and thus a **loss of autonomy for the elderly** in their daily activities. They also affect the **carers**, who assist the person recovering. In the context of the demographic transition, falls among the elderly are a **public health issue**, in the broad sense of physical, mental and social well-being, which goes beyond the strictly health-related aspects.

The necessity of awareness raising and public policy initiatives on that matter answers the priorities of the **Madrid International Plan of Action**, regarding health and well-being into old age and the promotion of enabling and supportive environments. The prevention of “**unintentional injuries** by developing a better understanding of their causes”, the focus on “the major **known risks arising from unhealthy diet, physical inactivity** and other unhealthy behaviours”, as well as “the improvement in housing and environmental design to promote independent living by taking into account the needs of older persons” rank among the recommendations of action.

Indeed, falls are **both a cause and a consequence of the loss of autonomy**. One of the key issues in **prevention is the identification of risk factors**. As age is not the only factor, it is important to also take into account the older persons' living conditions, habits and environment. The prevention of loss of autonomy and related risks must then be part of a broader action framework of **assessing the need for appropriate support and care**. **This aims at enabling preventive action among older people** (encouraging active ageing and keeping up with appropriate physical activity, training in digital technology, encouraging people to continue to live at home) and **among carers** (training in prevention and in identifying risk situations) who work with people who have lost their autonomy. **Adapting and equipping the environment**, whether at home or in residential care institutions, in particular through assistive technologies, are also important for risk prevention.

Programme and speakers

During the side-event sponsored by France, Italy and Switzerland, the participants will discuss **ways to prevent the loss of autonomy of older persons**, and in particular the causes and consequences of falls. **France recently launched a National Plan on preventing falls among Senior Citizens**, focusing on six priorities: identification of risks; adaption of housing; technical support for mobility; physical activity; tele assistance as a tool to prevent falls. The side-event will be an opportunity to **share feedback on national experiences** as well as **good practices and expertise**.

Panellists will present their **perspectives** about:

- The **risk factors for falls** and how **they contribute to or result from** the loss of autonomy;
- The **role of research** for a better understanding and response to loss of autonomy;
- The **means of action and actors to be involved in public policies aiming at preventing loss of autonomy and associated risks such as falls**, in particular regarding : support for active ageing environment adaptation and access to assistive technologies; awareness-raising for carers and caregivers.

Moderator : Mr. Alfredo FERRANTE, Head of Unit, Family national policies and international relations, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Italy (TBC)

Participants :

- Ms. Yuka SUMI, Responsible for Integrated Care for Older People (ICOPE), Medical officer– Ageing and Health (AAH), Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Ageing (MCA), World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland
- Mr. Cristian LEORIN, Assistive Technology expert, Seuro Project WP leader (AIAS), adjunct professor, University of Padova
- Mr. Alexis RINCKENBACH, Head of European and International Affairs Office, General Directorate for Social Cohesion, Ministry for Solidarity and Health, France
- Mr. Lorenzo CHIARI, FARSEEING project coordinator, Professor of Ageing and Rehabilitation Engineering, University of Bologna, Italy
- Mr. Thomas VOLLMER, Head of the Sector for Ageing, Generations and Society, Federal Social Insurance Office, Switzerland