



Short report about of 2017 UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Lisbon,

20 – 22 September 2017

“It is an honour for me to invite you to the NGO Forum taking place on 20 September 2017 in the Centro de Congressos (Conference Centre) in Lisbon. The NGO Forum is organised within the framework of the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing with its motto “A sustainable society for all ages: Realizing the potential of living longer” from 20 to 22 September 2012. The UNECE Conference was hosted by the government of the Republic of Portugal through the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security and takes place in the context of the third review and appraisal cycle of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA, 2002) and its UNECE-Regional Implementation Strategy.

The NGO Forum, organized by Santa Casa de Misericórdia de Lisboa in cooperation with the NGO Preparatory Committee, will provide a forum for discussion of NGO-representatives in the field of ageing. The outcome of the discussions in the Forum is expected to lead to the adoption of an NGODEclaration, which will be presented to the Ministers of the UNECE countries on 22 September 2017.”

Following the strict selection criteria for participants, I was surprised, but also very happy when in July 2017 I received a letter from Lisbon to inviting me both to the NGO Forum and to the UNECE Ministerial Conference, because the proposal for my participation in the Lisbon conference came from the Executive Board of the NGO Committee on Ageing at the UNO in Vienna. This honoured our good EFOS cooperation at the Committee on Ageing's working sessions at the UNO in Vienna and in the preparation of the NGO Forum during the past and this year.

UNECE NGO FORUM ON AGEING (Wednesday 20 September 2017)

A civil society forum and a research forum preceded the Ministerial Conference on 20 September 2017.

The objective of the NGO Forum was to foster a dialogue in and among civil society organisations representing older persons and dealing with ageing issues around the 3 themes of the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing 2017 from different angles of concern of civil

society actors, to identify strong and weak aspects in the MIPAA implementation and Ministerial Declaration, and to formulate demands and recommendations on behalf of civil society organisations.

The NGO Forum strongly supports the recommendation of the UN Independent Expert on the rights of older persons to establish a binding legal instrument on the human rights of older persons.

Lifelong learning was not treated as one of the main topics at this conference, but the topic was a subject that permeated all the discussions and the contributions made, and was mentioned in the NGO Political Declaration as well as in the 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration.

A very interesting contribution was made at the NGO Forum on Wednesday, 20 September, by the Portuguese President, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, who himself, as a 68-year-old man, joined the wishes of the elderly, criticisms of non-cooperation of the responsible authorities and society, concerning the questions about the elderly, physical deficiencies and the joys of active ageing from his own experience.

On Friday, at the ministerial conference, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres greeted us with a video message from New York and wished the conference a successful outcome.

The UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing took place in Lisbon, Portugal, from 21 to 22 September 2017.

The conference completed the third review and appraisal cycle (2012-2017) of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS). The focus was on 'Realizing the potential of living longer'. Conference panels will address this theme through the lens of:

1) Recognizing the Potential of Older Persons

The first expert panel highlighted strategies to sensitize societies to the value of older persons and their potentials and to the need to promote intergenerational solidarity.

2) Encouraging Longer Working Life and Ability to Work

The second expert panel presented successful strategies and progress achieved in the increase of employment opportunities for older persons. It will examine most effective incentives for employers and employees and present models of proven age management in enterprises.

3) Ensuring Ageing with Dignity

The third expert panel looked at effective and innovative concepts, policies and measures to empower people throughout the life cycle to lead an active and satisfactory life – in particular when growing old – and to avoid or diminish the need of assistance and care in old age.

Dr. Katarina Grunwald

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