



Rijksoverheid



The Hague 25 and 26 April 2013

## Scope and purpose

### ***Rationale***

Population ageing is a global phenomenon that is changing society in many ways creating both challenges and opportunities. Maintaining good health is central to an effective response. WHO takes a whole of organization approach in responding to these challenges, and emphasizes the importance of maintaining health, independence and participation across the life course.

However, regardless of the effectiveness of these strategies on healthy ageing, many people will experience significant functional decline towards the end of life and will require long term support. There is a need to explore how independence can be maintained as long as possible among this group, and what contribution health promotion and disease prevention can make. In addition, how can sustainable systems of good-quality long term care be developed to meet the needs of those who can no longer live fully independent.

Many international organisations and actors contribute to various aspects of policy analysis on ageing and functional decline. The OECD is active in the fields of financing and quality of long term care; the European Commission has initiatives such as the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing; the UN Economic Commission for Europe recently organised the ministerial conference for the review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing; the UN Population Fund published a report in 2012 on ageing in the 21st century; the World Bank, as well as NGO's such as HelpAge International work in a number of countries, notably in low and middle income settings, to assist governments and local initiatives to provide the support needed by older people.

### ***The meeting***

This WHO high level meeting in The Hague will bring together these international players along with key policy makers and experts from Member States to review state-of-the art evidence and good practice on how to define the evolving needs of older people in relation to functional decline and dependence and to develop a global agenda for action that will lead to a more effective response to these needs in the future.

The meeting is not planned as a stand-alone event, but rather as a strategic watershed of a more extended process of policy development. Major initiatives are already underway in this area that will provide input to the meeting, supplemented by additional background material developed specifically for the meeting by experts in the field. An overall background paper will identify a broader draft agenda for action that, if adopted and implemented, can foster universal access to appropriate care in low, middle and high income countries. This will include identification of the possible roles and responsibilities of key parties for future action.

Participants in the meeting will consider this broader action plan in plenary, but will also break into 4 workstreams across the meeting to consider core issues in more detail. These streams will take the input provided in relevant background papers, and use their own experience and knowledge, to identify a more detailed five year agenda for action in each of the following areas:

**1. Define, measure and inform:** Determining need and measuring progress are still evolving fields, with differences in concepts and terminology. What is the state of the art that can lead to a generic, shared conceptual models, definitions and measures for notions such as frailty, functional decline, long term care, social care, palliative care and independence?

**2. Prevent and Manage:** Many approaches to prevent and manage functional decline currently exist, but few meet the full needs and expectations of older populations. High income countries with systems in place face the challenge to restructure them in order to avoid fragmentation and to arrive at a full continuum of care, to focus more on the concept of independence and to keep systems affordable and sustainable. Middle income countries often face rapidly ageing populations and need to develop and scale up systems quickly, usually with much more limited financial means. Lower income countries will have to lay the foundations for future care systems, while offering solutions to meet immediate and emerging needs.

This stream of work will lead to the identification of the components of a prototype system that provides a continuum of care (including home, community and institutionalized care) that is integrated with, and complementary to, health services. It will also lead to a clearer understanding of the building blocks that are appropriate at different levels of economic development and how each can be developed as a step towards a more developed system.

**3. Mobilize resources:** To be sustainable, these systems will need financial and human resources. The workforce typically includes family or community carers, informal workers and formally employed community-based or institutional-based health workers. Funding may be out of pocket, publicly provided or subsidized through taxation revenue or sourced from relevant insurance programs.

This stream will summarize current approaches, define their strengths and weaknesses, identify knowledge gaps and recommend future action that can help governments at all levels of economic development to establish sustainable systems.

**4. Provide assistive devices and technological innovation:** Technology and medical advances offer many solutions to the challenges of functional decline, yet often these solutions seem technology driven and may not be relevant to the key needs of people at risk of dependence. This stream will assess the current trends in this area, map these against need and develop an agenda that can help governments and industry use technology/medical treatment more effectively in this area.

For all four topics, participants will be asked to evaluate what are the main gaps in knowledge and policy implementation in different resource settings (low, middle and high income countries) also through the lense of equity and gender considerations.

In a special high level session we will discuss the economic aspects of building systems for ageing populations, including potential benefits and affordability of health and long-term care systems seen together.

***Objective***

The main objective of the meeting is to develop an agenda for action, describing the main gaps and potential building blocks for countries at all levels of economic development and to identify the roles of the various international organisations to fill these gaps.

***Participants***

This high level meeting will bring together invited key stakeholders from international organisations, policy makers from selected low, middle and high income countries as well as some key scientists and NGOs in the field.