REPORT OF THE NINTH MEETING
OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON THE ACTIVE AGEING INDEX

I.   Organisation and attendance

The ninth meeting of the Expert Group on the Active Ageing Index (AAI) took place on 18 June 2019 in Brussels. It was organised back to back with the Stakeholder meeting on AAI by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The meeting was attended by 19 participants.[1]

II.   Objective

The ninth meeting of the Expert group discussed the most recently implemented and ongoing activities, including reporting on the 2018 AAI, an attempt to calculate AAI using the data from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), and clustering techniques used in the 2018 AAI Analytical report. The experts were asked to share their views and give advice on the AAI web-tool, currently under development, give feedback on the Stakeholder meeting, and discuss the future of AAI after the end of the current three-year project.[2]

III.   Brief summary and overview of decisions[3]

The lead researcher (Ms. Yolanda González-Rábago, representative of the University of the Basque Country (UPV)) presented the outcomes of the UPV work to the Expert group, including the 2018 AAI results for EU countries and use of SHARE for calculation of AAI. The experts discussed the opportunities that the use of SHARE might offer; the agreement was to use the original sources for AAI calculation even if they do not allow for the same in-depth analysis the single source would, and use calculations based on SHARE as a validation exercise.

The experts welcomed clustering of countries as a new approach to presenting EU AAI results (as opposed to ranking) that allows to look at AAI results from a different perspective. The authors of the Analytical report explained in detail the process of selecting the method for clustering. It was agreed though not to use clusters in the presentation of AAI results in the web-tool, as it would make it too complex. Another new initiative undertaken in the Analytical report was linking AAI results to policy instruments — the European Semester and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS). The initiative was generally welcomed by the experts as a way of demonstrating policy relevance of AAI, and suggestions were made to look into linking AAI with the Pillar of Social Rights.

The experts were informed about the outcomes of the pilot study on AAI at subnational (NUTS 2) level in Romania and the national seminar that took place on 30 May 2019 in Bucharest. The study demonstrated important differences in AAI results among eight Romanian regions, and also between AAI for men and women. The study report will be published on the AAI Wiki in the upcoming months. The national seminar brought together some 35 participants representing four different Ministries, National Statistical Office, various national agencies, research community and NGOs.

Different initiatives — both under the project and outside of it — to calculate AAI for non-EU countries were discussed. These included the cooperation of UNECE with the National Statistical Office of Norway, Centre for Demographic Research in the Republic of Moldova, and others. The Experts provided additional information on other similar initiatives. The experts were also informed about the

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[1] See Annex 1 for the list of participants.
[2] See Annex 2 for the meeting agenda.
[3] See Annex 3 for the minutes of the meeting.

results of a study by one of the Expert group members (Mr. Asghar Zaidi, London School of Economics and Political Science) on adaption and calculation of AAI for China and the Republic of Korea, and the plan to extend it to ASEAN countries.

Experts were asked to give feedback and advice on the AAI web-tool presented by its developer — the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) — at the Stakeholder meeting. A number of concrete recommendations were offered by the participants, including on the content of the home page, usage of visuals different from the maps, need (and a potential volunteer) for a "methodology help line", incorporation of non-EU countries' results into the tool etc. The project team collected the comments and will share them with the developers.

Given that this was the final meeting of the Expert group in this third development project, the last item on the agenda was the future of AAI after the end of the project. Majority of experts expressed their will to continue the work on AAI; it was agreed that it would be counterproductive to stop altogether, now that AAI is being taken up by numerous countries and regions or cities. A key component in ensuring the future use of AAI is that it gets regularly updated (every two years). One of the members (Mr. Sergio Murillo Corzo, Biscay Provincial Government, Spain) announced that it could be possible that UPV would be able to update EU AAI in the future. This would require an agreement with either UNECE or EC. The rest of the discussion focused mainly on how to organise the work and which sources of funding could be explored. The decision was that the further activities should primarily be aimed at making policy relevance of AAI as explicit as possible; visualisation and dissemination; targeting regional and local level policymakers, getting support of the civil society. In the end, it was agreed that the members of the Expert group, and where possible UNECE and EC, will proceed with efforts to disseminate information on AAI and present it as much as possible, while trying to put forward its value for policymaking.

Main highlights of / decisions taken at the meeting are as follows:

Research
- Experts were informed about the exercise of using SHARE to calculate AAI indicators; it was agreed that it is a good way of validating AAI results.
- Experts welcomed clustering of countries as an informative way of presenting EU AAI results.
- Experts were informed about the study of AAI results at subnational level in Romania and the upcoming similar study for Spain.
- Different initiatives of AAI calculation for non-EU countries were discussed. Experts offered new information on some of the cases (Azerbaijan, Israel, Russian Federation).
- AAI adapted for China and the Republic of Korea was presented to the experts. It was agreed not to call it a "new AAI" not to cause any misunderstandings.
- The calculations of AAI for the Republic of North Macedonia will be carried out before the end of the project.

Outreach, promoting use of AAI and communication
- The project team collected the recommendations of the Expert group on the AAI web-tool and will transfer these to the developer.
- Experts were informed about the national seminar in Romania (30 May 2019) and an upcoming one in Spain (26 August 2019).
- The Stakeholder meeting was considered as overall successful; a number of comments were made regarding a format of a meeting and the communication strategy (see below).
- The reports on studies for Romania and Spain will be uploaded to the AAI Wiki.

Future of AAI and other matters
- Experts expressed their commitment to continue the work.

- There is a possibility that the University of the Basque Country will be able to update AAI results for EU in the future (see below).
- Main areas for future efforts should be making policy relevance of AAI as explicit as possible, visualisation and dissemination, targeting regional and local level policymakers, getting support of the civil society.
- Members of the Expert group, and where possible UNECE and EC, will proceed with efforts to disseminate information on AAI and present it as much as possible, while trying to put forward its value for policymaking.
- Experts were asked to take part in the external evaluation of the AAI project that will be carried out by an independent consultant engaged by UNECE

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ANNEX 2. AGENDA OF THE NINTH EXPERT GROUP MEETING

18 JUNE 2019

Chair: Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich, UNECE

09:30 – 09:45   Welcome
Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich, UNECE
Ettore Marchetti, European Commission

09:45 – 10:15   2018 AAI and other research outcomes
Yolanda González-Rábago, University of the Basque Country

10:15 – 10:30   Q&A

10:30 – 10:50   AAI Analytical report "behind the scene"
Giovanni Lamura, Andrea Principi, INRCA

10:50 – 11:05   Q&A

11:05 – 11:20   AAI at subnational level in Romania, seminar in Bucharest
Ettore Marchetti, European Commission

11:20 – 11:30   Q&A

11:30 – 11:50   Coffee break

11:50 – 12:05   AAI in non-EU countries: updates
Olga Kharitonova, UNECE

12:05 – 12:20   AAI beyond UNECE (Republic of Korea, China)
Asghar Zaidi, Seoul National University, London School of Economics and Political Science

12:20 – 12:40   Q&A

12:40 – 13:30   **Discussion**: AAI web-tool: what can be improved?

13:30 – 14:30   Lunch

14:30 – 15:00   **Discussion**: stakeholder meeting outcomes

15:00 – 15:10   Third phase of the AAI project: brief overview
Olga Kharitonova, UNECE / Ettore Marchetti, European Commission

15:10 – 16:15   **Roundtable on the AAI future**

16:15 – 16:30   Summary
Ettore Marchetti, European Commission
Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich, UNECE

16:30   Close of the meeting

ANNEX 3. MINUTES OF THE EXPERT GROUP DISCUSSION

18 June (9:30–16:30)

Chair — Ms. Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich (UNECE)

The Chair welcomed the participants and opened the meeting. She reminded that this meeting is the last one under the third phase of the AAI project and could be the last one altogether after seven years of work on AAI. The Chair pointed out that the composite indicators are mushrooming and becoming more and more popular despite the remaining scepticism. She announced that in the afternoon the group will discuss the future of the index and the project. She informed / reminded the Expert group that the institutional consultancy agreement between UNECE and the University of Southampton was interrupted due to the fact that the lead researcher (Mr. Asghar Zaidi) left the University and the latter did not have the capacity to carry out the rest of the work. This led to the situation where a number of deliverables were not produced. UNECE then launched a call for an institutional consultant and as a result engaged in December 2018 the University of the Basque Country (UPV) to implement the remainder of the tasks. Ms. Yolanda González-Rábago of UPV, present at the meeting, was introduced to the Expert group in her new capacity of the lead researcher.

Mr. Ettore Marchetti (European Commission) welcomed the participants on behalf of the European Commission. He reiterated that the number of composite indicators has been increasing since 2012, and within the European Commission there has been a lot of work done on them by its Joint Research Centre. The centre also organises training on composite indicators. He pointed out that the topic of active ageing has seen a decrease in "popularity" within the European Commission since 2012 (the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations), but it is essential to keep it present on the EC agenda. Regarding the AAI project, Mr. Marchetti expressed his hope that it would be possible to continue some work on it, but currently the resources were not available.

The Chair gave the floor to Ms. González-Rábago to present some of the results of the research work carried out by UPV.

Ms. González-Rábago started with the presentation of the **2018 AAI results for EU countries**. The overall results and domain scores were presented dividing countries into three to five groups (based on the equal range of the scores) — an approach different from the one used by the authors of the Analytical report (see below). The overall AAI varies from 27.7 to 47.2, with the EU average being 35.7. There are no large leaps from country to country. The gender gap persists and in 25 countries men have higher results than women. France and Lithuania are the closest to the parity in terms of the overall AAI (the situation varies from domain to domain). The highest gender gap is, unsurprisingly, in the Employment domain; and the only domain with the "positive" (meaning in favour of women) gap is the second one (Participation in Society); the Fourth domain (Capacity for active ageing) seems to be the closest to gender equality in terms of the domain score. Regarding the changes in AAI over the period 2008–2016 (data years for 2010 and 2018 AAI, respectively) there has been a general increase for 27 countries, and for half of EU countries the increase was of four points or more, with the EU average of 3.7. Overall AAI gender gap has narrowed down (from –4.7 in 2008 to –3.1 in 2016), but in six countries it has actually increased.

Ms. González-Rábago stopped on the matter of comparability of the AAI results over time. While the majority of indicators are fully comparable, the comparability is not full in case of indicators 2.1 (Voluntary activities) and 2.4 (Political participation) with minor changes in the underlying survey (European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)) questions between 2007 and 2012 waves. The situation of two other indicators based on EQLS is as follow: the indicator 2.2 (Care to children and grandchildren) is not comparable through time; and the 2.3 (Care to infirm and disabled) is not comparable between the 2012 and 2016 waves — both due to changes in questions in EQLS.

The presenter then moved to the issue of exploration of **using the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) for calculation of AAI indicators**. Only nine indicators of SHARE are fully comparable with the original questions. Four of them are the first domain indicators, though the indicators 1.3 and 1.4 (Employment rates at age 65–69 and 70–74) show very different results in SHARE as compared to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) used for the original AAI (the employment rates being lower when calculated based on SHARE). Eight out of these nine indicators are available for 25 out of 28 countries, while one (indicator 4.4 Use of ICT) — for 11 only. The comparability of the other indicators is limited to different extents. One indicator is not possible to calculate using SHARE (4.1 Life expectancy at age 55); and calculation of another three requires usage of additional data sources (3.4 Relative median income at 65; 3.5 No poverty risk; and 4.2 Share of healthy life expectancy at age 55). Eights indicators are available for 11 countries only, while the rest — for 25 out of 28.

Ms. González-Rábago mentioned the two other tasks of which UPV was in charge: recalculation of "goalposts" and potentially analysing the impact of the population age structure on the AAI results. The short notes on the outcomes will be uploaded to the AAI Wiki or shared with the Expert group.

The discussion followed:

Regarding comparability of the AAI indicators 2.2 and 2.3 over time, Mr. Heribert Engstler (German Centre of Gerontology) suggested splitting the second domain into two subdomains when analysing the results: one devoted to care (2.2 and 2.3) and one devoted to other forms of participation in society (2.1 and 2.4). This would allow to have a clearer picture about the developments in this domain. Mr. Robert Anderson (Eurofound — developer of EQLS) pointed out that the revisions of the questions in EQLS were made to make them more precise. It was his view that all the categories of population that should be asked the questions on care provision to children and grandchildren are covered under the EQLS 2016.

Regarding the use of SHARE, Mr. Marchetti informed the Expert group that for the next wave 8 of the survey the field work has started and it should be finished by June 2020. This wave will include 25 countries for all questions. Until SHARE 6 there was partial participation of the countries, but now it will be 25 (Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom either do not participate at all or do not use the same survey). Wave (2017) was SHARE Life coupling a limited set of questions on the current situation with a set on work and health events; wave 8 will have a full questionnaire on the current situation of the older persons.

In response to Ms. Eszter Zolyomi's (European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research (ECV)) question regarding the reason behind attempts to calculate AAI using SHARE, the Chair explained that the idea was to see if, with the EU support, SHARE becomes a survey with full EU coverage, and to use it as a (almost) single source of data for AAI which in case of some indicators would have a bigger sample than in the "original" AAI surveys (e.g. in case of EQLS or the European Social Survey (ESS)). This would also allow to compare the "original" AAI results with those based on another reliable data source. Ms. Zolyomi agreed that as a validation exercise it could be useful for some items, e.g. care is better reflected in SHARE, but not such indicators as employment rates or income-related ones.

Mr. Asghar Zaidi (London School of Economics and Political Science) recommended to stick to EQLS as a source in case of the indicator 4.3 (Mental well-being), as it is too complex an indicator to change and also since the work has been done calculating it using the European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), a highly reliable data source, to make the validation of EQLS-based results.

Mr. Jürgen Bauknecht (University of Applied Sciences, Düsseldorf) pointed out that the advantage of SHARE is that it has a large sample and allows to go deeper to a microlevel; it also allows for tracking group-specific developments, i.e. what really happens and not just at the percentage level. Mr. Andrea Principi (INRCA) agreed that EU SILC has a more structured questionnaire while SHARE offers more at an individual level, and as a result, people's perceptions may count more in SHARE than in LFS.

Mr. Jean-Marie Robine (INSERM) stated that on the plus side SHARE provides the data of reliable quality for the AAI indicators obtained from the same people (single source), but at the same time SHARE is produced by researchers without involving the national statistical offices, and for external users it is more difficult to understand and analyse the survey results, thus there will be less research work done outside of SHARE itself.

Mr. Zaidi insisted that we should stick to the definitions that were set under the project. He stressed that it is best to apply harmonization and not standardisation. Even if different questions are used the concept / rationale of indicators should be preserved. Some changes in methodology might lead to a better harmonization. The Chair pointed out that not all the changes are made in the direction of harmonization and sometimes such changes may have other goals. Mr. Anderson added that it is essential for ensuring high quality of survey data to analyse the questions, control their translation, and even the order in which the questions are asked, as it influences significantly the respondents' replies; and that some countries fail to ensure the adequate quality of translation.

The meeting moved to the next item — the presentation by Mr. Giovanni Lamura and Mr. Andrea Principi, both from INRCA, of two important aspects of the **2018 AAI Analytical report** (launched on the day before at the Stakeholder meeting on AAI): **clustering of the countries and linking AAI results to policy frameworks**.

Previously the EU AAI results were mainly presented as ranking. The idea behind introducing clustering in the Analytical report was to have a different way of presenting the results in a format suitable for both monitoring and political purposes. Methodology used was hierarchical cluster analysis to identify groups of cases that present the "maximum similarity" within each group and are, at the same time, as different as possible from the other groups. To define the number of clusters a k-means method was applied. Domain scores were selected as indicators for cluster analysis, and grouping of countries into three, four, five and six groups was tested. Out of these options, the four-cluster solution had the smallest number of outliers. The AAI results for EU countries were therefore presented in the Analytical report using four clusters.

A new element introduced into the Analytical report was linking the AAI results to the two ageing-related policy instruments currently in place — the European Semester for EU countries and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS) for the 56 UNECE countries. To do this, first a comparison was implemented of the areas where gains can be made as highlighted by AAI with the areas identified by the Country-Specific Recommendations (CSR) of the European Semester and challenges specified in national reports on MIPAA/RIS implementation; second, based on this comparison, the areas that were identified by AAI but not mentioned in CSR or/and MIPAA/RIS national reports were pointed to as those that should be addressed in the next round of MIPAA/RIS review or preparation of CSR.

The discussion followed:

Regarding **clustering**, Mr. Zaidi asked if it would have been better to base clustering on the AAI overall score rather than the domain scores, as basing clustering of overall results on single components (i.e. domains) could be misleading. Mr. Principi replied that using domain scores provides a basis for more specific policy recommendations.

Mr. Robine asked if an idea to use a mixed approach was considered, where, for example, one technique would apply to identify a set of clusters, and another one — to cluster further those that turned out to be too large (referring to a slide featuring the dendrogram resulting from hierarchical analysis). Mr. Lamura replied that because of a limited time period to produce the report, it was not possible to test other approaches.

Mr. Andres Vikat (UNECE) found that it was a good approach to demonstrate the AAI results. He pointed out that working on identifying the clusters already gives a wealth of information and that it is useful to synthesise the data.

Mr. Marchetti raised a question if clustering should be introduced into the visual tool (web-tool). The Chair pointed out that clustering would need to be explained, and it is not always easy to understand for "external" users. Mr. Lamura added that users of the visual tools focus rather on a country and not on EU as a whole.

Regarding **linking AAI results to policy instruments**, Mr. Karel Van Den Bosch (Belgium Federal Planning Office) made a point that CSR are very specific, and that the project should encourage policy learning, e.g. one county should be able to learn from the others. Mr. Marchetti replied that the purpose of the index is not to give recommendations on how to change policies, but to indicate where more potential of older persons could be realised. Mr. Van Den Bosch insisted that some learning elements should be still provided. Mr. Lamura suggested peer reviews as a potential learning element.

Mr. Anderson pointed out that CSR is a different from AAI exercise, as they are a matter of policy priorities. The Pillar of Social Rights could be a good choice for matching with AAI results as it is more related to active ageing. Mr. Marchetti added that AAI is as objective as it can be, while European Semester focuses on priorities (a country might have a number of problematic areas, but only what is considered important would be included into CSR). Mr. Zaidi stated that AAI helps identify policy priorities, and that the Analytical report helped to make a link with more specific policy priorities of CSR. He added that policymaking is the matter of national and subnational levels, and we should not focus on EU level only. The Chair summarised by stressing that there are pros and cons of focusing on national view only. There are also EU-level policies, e.g. in work-life balance care days. She agreed that it could be a good idea to link AAI with the Pillar of Social Rights and reminded that while MIPAA is not a binding policy tool, it leads to policy formation and adjustment.

Mr. Marchetti informed the Expert group about the outcomes of the **pilot study on AAI at subnational level in Romania and the national seminar** that took place on 30 May 2019 in Bucharest. The study was carried out by a research consultant hired by UNECE. AAI was calculated and analysed for eight Romanian regions (NUTS 2 level) for four points in time (2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016). A gender gap was also analysed. The results show that there are important differences across NUTS 2 regions in Romania in terms of AAI. There are also differences in the level of economic development, but its relation with the AAI is not a linear positive one. Regions have seen different trends in AAI over time: in four regions the AAI score has increased (and in two — by more than 6 points), in two it has not changed, and in the other two it has decreased. Romania has a particularly high employment rate in older age groups (particularly in two regions where the employment rate at age 65–69 and 70–74 exceeds 22 per cent in one region and 36 per cent in the other). The gender gap varies across regions. The overall gender gap, though it has narrowed down, stays at the level of –2.3 points. The employment and independent living domains show higher results for men that for women, while women have higher social participation domain score (mainly due to much higher participation in provision of care to children and grandchildren) and there is a close to 0 gap in the capacity domain. The national seminar on 30 May was co-organised with the Romanian Ministry of Labour and Social Justice. It gathered some 35 participants representing different ministries (hosting Ministry, Ministries of Economy, of Education, of Public Finance), National Institute of Statistics, national agencies (of health insurance, for persons with disabilities and other), General Directorates of Social Assistance and Child Protection from several districts, researchers, NGOs and other stakeholders. Ms. Jolanta Perek-Białas (Warsaw School of Economics and Jagiellonian University, Krakow) was invited to share Poland's experience of AAI application at the subnational level.

The Chair, who also attended the national seminar, added that the Ministries that attended the seminar, especially the host Ministry and those of Economy and of Public Finance, demonstrated that they work

very closely with the research community and strive to build evidence base to support their policy decisions. She informed the participants that the report on the study will be available from the Wiki once it is edited. Ms. Perek-Białas shared her impression that there was a large array of varied policy solutions that the Government put forward. Ms. Olga Kharitonova (UNECE; also attended the national seminar) added that according to the results of the study and the conclusions made by the research consultant it appears that the employment rates decrease with an increase of income, but to a certain point: after the income reaches a certain level the trend is reversed and the employment starts growing. The research consultant pointed out at the national seminar that it would be important to look more in depth into this situation and try to identify that turning point.

Ms. Zolyomi stated that the national seminars are a good exercise as they allow for a direct country involvement, make policymakers and other stakeholders aware of the situation in terms of active ageing, and urge them to take actions.

Mr. Zaidi reacted to the matter of particularly high employment at older age groups in Romania, and pointed out that higher levels of employment is a desirable outcome but only if they are accompanied by the higher values in other domains, i.e. there are conditions created for older people to continue working. Mr. Bernd Marin (European Bureau for Policy Consulting and Social Research) agreed that increases in employment rate should go along with other advances; he reminded that in two clusters higher employment scores were accompanied by higher scores in other domains; though in the two other clusters the patterns were more divergent.

Ms. Kharitonova gave a brief overview of the situation with **AAI in non-EU countries**. She focussed specifically on the Republic of Moldova and Norway. The Republic of Moldova has been revising the results of the AAI calculations implemented in 2015 as the census data are being gradually issued by the National Statistical Office of the country. The main reason for the revision is that the census results showed that the size of population of the Republic of Moldova was not correctly reflected before. A number of AAI indicators are thus subject to revision. The Centre for Demographic Research in consultation with UNECE has been working on the recalculation. They made an attempt to look beyond national results and calculated AAI for rural and urban populations. The results are preliminary and will be revised further. Regarding Norway, UNECE has been in contact with the National Statistical Office in order to update the results obtained in 2015 using the most recent data and closest possible proxies for the indicators based on EQLS (2.1–2.4, 3.1 (Physical exercise) and 4.3). For the indicators 2.1, 2.3 and 4.3 it was decided to use SILC as a source, for 3.1 and 2.4 — ESS, and for 2.2 — Generations and Gender Survey (NORLAG3). If compared with EU, Norway's AAI is slightly above that of the top country (Sweden). Ms. Kharitonova added that at the same time, the 2014 AAI results for Iceland are higher than 2018 AAI of EU and Norway. She also mentioned several initiatives to calculate AAI that were undertaken outside of the project (e.g. Israel, Russian Federation, Ukraine) and that several other countries have been in touch requesting to help calculate AAI or promising to do so. UNECE is going to help calculate 2018 AAI results for Serbia based partially on the data the National Statistical Office provided; at the Stakeholder meeting the representative of the Swiss Statistical Office stated that they would be interested in an update of the AAI results as well; and the UNFPA county office in Azerbaijan contacted UNECE to ask for support in producing AAI for the country. Ms. Kharitonova asked if experts had more information on any of the mentioned or other countries' initiatives.

Ms. Maria Varlamova (Jagiellonian University) informed the participants that the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation requested AAI to be computed (though it is called an index of active longevity) for monitoring of the ageing-related action plan. The index will be calculated by the National Statistical Office, though, according to Ms. Varlamova, even if the fieldwork is reliable, not all the variables are comparable with the original AAI. Ms. Perek-Białas mentioned that she was in touch with colleagues from Israel, and a possibility of a seminar on AAI was discussed, but there is no more news for the moment.

Mr. Zaidi presented the outcomes of the study he had been working on to adapt and calculate **AAI for China and the Republic of Korea**. The work has generated interest among policymakers in the countries. Main challenge is the lack of data. However, the situation is changing as many household surveys are being started and, in a few years, they are expected to yield the required data. Based on the current calculations, the overall AAI score for China is 37.3, which is higher than that of the Republic of Korea — 35.3 points. Both countries have high employment scores and very low independent living scores. In terms of social participation, the Republic of Korea shows the score of 4 points, while China — 18.3. In the last domain, the Republic of Korea's score is higher than that of China. Mr. Zaidi made a remark that high score in employment in China is due mainly to the high labour activity among older people on their land plots. Mr. Zaidi explained the low level of social participation in the Republic of Korea by the high level of provision of formal care in the country.

The Chair asked what indicators are behind the low score of the Republic of Korea in the third domain. Mr. Zaidi explained that the older poverty rate is very high in the country. Though, he added, it might be overestimated due to the way of measurement (plus people underreport how much pension they receive). The minimum social assistance for older people is lower than for the other population groups. At the same time, as Mr. Marin pointed out, the severe material deprivation is not high.

Mr. Robine agreed that it is challenging to develop comparable AAI. He pointed out that the populations in EU and the countries in question are very different — China's population is much younger, there is for now no big group of oldest old. Another point was that the retirement age is much lower in China. He added regarding social participation that it is a cultural norm to engage migrant "helpers", and this might explain low care provision, therefore AAI (interpretation) needs to be adjusted. Mr. Zaidi replied that AAI measures the actual contribution of older persons so the low score in care provision is still legitimate. Mr. Marin added that there are age-structure differences also in Europe.

Mr. Lamura followed up on the point of the cultural and societal differences and made a remark that in the mid- or long-term it might be necessary to rethink ageing-related principles and make them less Eurocentric. Mr. Bauknecht noted that the Republic of Korea is a good example of how higher AAI score does not necessarily mean "better". Mr Zaidi remarked that at the same time studies show that engagement in care provision, as long as not vigorous, is beneficial for health, so if older people had an opportunity to help with care provision it might improve their health.

The Chair agreed with Mr. Lamura and added that the definition of active ageing that we use comes from the European region (or "Western"), and might not be entirely suitable for countries of other regions. She also urged not to call AAI adapted for ASEAN countries a "new AAI" as it could indicate that it is replacing the "old" AAI and lead to confusion.

Mr. Vikat pointed out that these differences are important to take into account, as the AAI scores of China or the Republic of Korea may be dragged down by a very low score in one domain that could simply be the result of different approaches to certain social phenomena, such as for example care provision. However, he added, it is up to social scientists to make an in-depth analysis of these differences and their impact on the AAI results. Mr. Robine stated that such differences exist also within EU, where applying norms of north EU countries to the south EU countries could generate problems. He reiterated that AAI measures how much older people are being active, but "active" means different things in different societies. Also, when we look at older or poorer population it becomes more difficult to interpret the AAI results.

Mr. Anderson mentioned a report prepared by Eurofound and ILO on working conditions worldwide analysing also the situation of older workers (issued last month). The older workers in the Republic of Korea, for example, seem to be more exposed to physical risks than in Europe. The report is available from https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_696174/lang--en/index.htm.

The next point on the agenda was the **comments on the AAI web-tool** the first "work-in-progress" version of which was presented on the day before, at the Stakeholder meeting. The web-tool is being developed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) in consultation with DG EMPL and UNECE. Numerous comments from the meeting participants were collected by the project team, the experts were invited to share their views.

Mr. Vikat acknowledged the good effort behind the tool, but insisted on making it light and simple. Regarding the home page, the list on the right should not be limited to five top countries in the AAI results. The map on the home page appears distorted, and some big countries take too much place, while smaller ones are not visible.

Mr. Robine gave an example of developing visuals for the healthy life years, where, faced with similar issues, they decided not to use maps. A possible solution could be to replace countries on the map with the boxes of the same size. Mr. Marin gave another example where a map was avoided by using country flags placed geographically.

Mr. Zaidi stressed the importance of having a technical support group that would help users to avoid any misinterpretations. There could be an email address to which questions on AAI could be sent. Mr. Zaidi volunteered to help in supporting such a "help-line". The technical support of the platform itself will be ensured by JRC. Mr. Marchetti agreed that a methodology support group would be very useful.

Ms. Zolyomi inquired if there will be any monitoring of usage of the tool in place, collecting information on the "most clicked" features. She also asked if and how the updates of AAI results will be made. The Chair gave an example of OECD monitoring which weights were most often selected by the users adjusting the by-default ones on the dashboard of indicators. This could potentially be used, if JRC can develop such monitoring. The update of EU AAI results in the future could be done by adding the most recent and removing the oldest datasets.

Ms. Varlamova asked if non-EU countries' results and those at subnational level will be added to the web-tool. Ms. Kharitonova replied that the current layout implies having a map of comparable results on the home page (EU countries), but it was planned to add a separate tab for non-EU results and another one for subnational. However, at the moment they probably will not be interactive. Mr. Marchetti added that most likely these will be links to reports; and that it is important to avoid comparing incomparable datasets.

Mr. Vikat expressed his concern that adding non-EU countries to the map or other interactive features could be misleading as it would imply the non-EU results are comparable with the EU ones. Moreover, it would complicate the tool. The Chair replied that in some cases non-EU countries are (almost) fully comparable, e.g. Iceland, plus it would be discouraging for the other countries who worked on their AAI not to be mentioned in the tool at all. Mr. Vikat asked is in this case it would be possible to integrate Switzerland; the Chair replied that there are several indicators that are not comparable with EU as of now.

Ms. Varlamova suggested to include other countries nonetheless and indicate by colour that they are computed differently; and also, to add country profiles for each (UNECE) country. Mr. Marin insisted that the non-EU countries should be included in the rankings. The Chair responded that the project team or the developer would need to get validation by a country before uploading any information. Still, a country profile could be a solution for non-EU countries. In this case, there should be a "clickable" list of countries leading to the country profile pages.

Mr. Lamura pointed out that the maintenance and update are key to any web-tool being successful and useful. The way forward could be to have a less interactive tool (unless there is specific funding for the web-tool development and update) to make it more comprehensive and easier to update.

Mr. Robine recommended to add a small "m" next to each indicator which would lead to a page with metadata for the indicators.

The discussion moved to the next item — the **Stakeholder meeting held on 17 June 2019** back to back with this meeting. The experts were asked to give their opinion on the meeting and suggest what could be done better next time.

Overall there seemed to be an agreement that the meeting was worthwhile. The areas where it could have been better were outlined as follows. Ms. Varlamova stated that more direct communication and interaction would have been useful, including giving space for stakeholders to raise the issues they are facing, providing more context. Ms. Kharitonova pointed out that this would have required a different event format, such as a workshop. Mr. Lamura pointed out that it would have been good to disseminate the materials that were launched at the meeting in advance, e.g. two weeks before, so that the participants could give their feedback. The Chair replied that it was more of a communication event, and collection of feedback was not the top priority. The panel of AAI users, she noted, was an interactive exercise, and seemed to be appreciated by all the participants. Ms. Zolyomi mentioned that she appreciated the quiz ("AAI refresher" — was used as a way of reengaging the participants after the lunch break). The Chair expressed her regret that the civil society representatives were not numerous at the meeting and those who were present were not vocal.

Ms. Kharitonova gave a brief overview of the activities implemented under **the third phase of the AAI project**, since May 2016, and of the activities ongoing and to be carried out till the end of the project in August 2019. The latter included the study of AAI results at subnational level in Spain and a national seminar in Madrid in August; calculation of AAI for the Republic of North Macedonia; finalisation of several research reports. The Chair added that, in accordance with the UNECE rules, all extrabudgetary projects (such as AAI) are subject to an evaluation by an external consultant. Once the consultant is engaged, they will reach out to all the stakeholders. The Chair asked the Expert group to help implement this exercise by participating in interviews and replying to a survey. The Chair also asked the Expert group to share information on any research studies/papers that might involve usage of AAI and, if possible, links and abstracts, so that UNECE could form a bibliography.

Mr. Vikat gave an update on the work of the **UNECE Task Force on measuring old-age population in institutions**: the Recommendations are expected to be issued this year; there will be a mapping of existing practices and a number of general advice and suggestions. Mr. Vikat promised to send the link to the Recommendations once there are ready.

Mr. Zaidi mentioned that he is a member of the Titchfield City Group where he watches over linking with the UNECE recommendations. The City Group looks more into data itself, not metadata.

Mr. Sergio Murillo Corzo (Biscay Provincial Government) informed the group that in October 2017 the project on older people in institutions started in Biscay Province, with the involvement of the University of the Basque Country. He added that they will be grateful for any feedback on their work under this project.

The meeting moved to its last item — the **future of AAI**. The majority of the Expert group members present expressed their will to continue working on AAI, its dissemination and promotion. The Chair pointed out that one of the essential components of AAI survival after the project would be its regular (every two year) update.

Mr. Lamura stated that there are two main strategies: either to first seek resources and then decide what activities could be done or agree on common meaningful goals and look for funding for them. In his view the second approach is preferable, and he suggested that brainstorming in the next weeks would be useful. He added that it would be a waste if these effort does not find other ways and channels to support policymaking. Mr. Zaidi reacted to the last point saying that it is too harsh to call it a waste given that we

have achieved a lot over the years; and that the index is being used by different stakeholders including policymakers. Mr. Marin suggested as a compromise that it would be a waste not to continue the work, given how much has been invested

Mr. Vikat pointed out that we have a tool that has been fully built up, now we need to capitalise on it. There needs to be more systematic promotion of AAI — linking to existing policy priorities is the most obvious way. In EC — to see how it will serve new priorities (with the new Commissioner), in the United Nations, it is primarily the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Funding opportunities in institutional contexts are limited. European academic funding on a big scale could be sought. New Horizon programmes of the EU could be looked into. Mr. Vikat gave an example of UNECE task forces that, as a group, rarely meet face-to-face; he admitted that it is useful to have meetings, but when funding is limited it is possible nonetheless to meet online.

Mr. Marin suggested, if the visual tool development continues, that at its next stage the group can suggest how to change it (e.g. each will come up with five specific comments on how to improve the tool functioning), exchange among themselves via email, provide comments to developers, give them time to implement (e.g. two months) and aim at having a meeting afterwards to discuss the results.

Mr. Murillo Corzo mentioned that in September 2020 there will be another Silver week in the Biscay Province (like the one in 2018 during which the Second international seminar on AAI was organised); it will include a scientific part and a fair on the sliver economy. The Biscay Province with the support of UPV will continue updating their AAI; but to put it in context they also will need updated EU results; and potentially UPV could do this as well. While they do not necessarily require funding, some sort of collaboration agreement with UNECE or EC should be made. The Chair replied that if UPV keeps updating AAI it would be a great support. For the 2020 Silver week, if the visual tool is ready, it could be presented there, along with new research developments, in particular the study on AAI for Spain's regions.

Ms. Zolyomi suggested that it could be of use to investigate possibilities of funding from EU programmes that fund networks for activities, such as development of guidelines, meetings, up to four years. Mr. Robine pointed out that this kind of funding is aimed more at researchers than international organisations. Ms. Zolyomi disagreed; plus, she argued, experts could apply on behalf of international organisations. Ms. Perek-Białas specified that these programmes fund only travel, though it would be helpful for the Expert group to keep regular meetings.

Mr. Robine stated that during last decade, EC has put lots of funds into supporting the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP AHA), main target of which was to increase the healthy life expectancy by two years in EU by 2020. The project has been ongoing for a few years, and now it is slowly vanishing. He stressed that it is not clear if and how EC wants to proceed. Mr. Robine added that he personally participated in three to four initiatives on active ageing in parallel; they all started strongly, but now slowly are disappearing. The pattern seems to be repeating now with AAI. We think we have been successful, and now we stop it. He raised a question if a meeting should be organised with EC officials on these matters.

Mr. Principi shared the opinion expressed by Mr. Robine. He pointed out that the work on AAI has serious implications, it is now clearly seen on the example of Italy where the national law is being developed with AAI as a monitoring tool. Mr. Principi stated that for Italy it is important and it would be strange from the perspective of the country to see the project end at the very moment they started to exploit it.

Mr. Lamura stressed that we are missing the component of stakeholder representative, like AGE Platform Europe, who can help convince policymakers. Help of Ms. Anne-Sophie Parent (AGE Platform Europe) would be invaluable in this regard. In his reply to Mr. Robine, Mr. Lamura pointed out that there are also examples of EC-funded projects that continue, e.g. SHARE.

The Chair made a point that EC has a political agenda that changes every five years. International organisations don't have a mandate to support research activities; and it is not the purpose of DG EMPL to fund research either. Currently the situation is that Commissioners do mention active ageing, but not necessarily provide support or take actions. Projects reach maturity, and then live on their own. Possibilities to apply for different relevant sources of funding were briefly discussed (including Horizon 2020 and Joint programming initiatives). It was also suggested that a way forward could be linking AAI with long-term care, people with disabilities, and other matters that are high on the agenda and have clear connection with active ageing.

The further activities, according to the majority of the participants, should primarily be aimed at making policy relevance of AAI as explicit as possible, visualisation and dissemination, targeting regional and local levels policymakers, getting support of the civil society. Mr. Murillo Corzo stated that a strong message for policymakers is that we provide data for decision-making, and this is what should be put forward (as opposed to the message that AAI is all about research).

In the end, it was agreed that the members of the Expert group, and where possible UNECE and EC, will proceed with efforts to disseminate information on AAI and present it as much as possible, while trying to put forward its value for policymaking.

The Chair thanked the Expert group for their commitment to AAI and the project over the past seven years and expressed her hope that this effort will continue in the future.