



Concept Note and Preliminary Program (v. July 2, 2018):

Annual Meeting of the World Health Organization Collaborating Center Plus Network for Healthy Ageing (WHO CC+)

Purpose. This meeting brings together network members (existing and potential) to understand what institutions are doing through research to promote and facilitate the implementation of the WHO Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health; and to agree on the added value of the network and develop a clear work plan for 2018-2020, in particular a multi-country study to inform a baseline report for the Decade of Healthy Ageing.

Meeting venue: Haus der Akademien (Academic House), Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAGW), Laupenstrasse 7, 3001 Bern, Switzerland

Date: July 2-3, 2018

I. Background

WHO strategy and mandate. The WHO Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health (GSAP) sets out two overarching goals - an action plan to build up more evidence on what can be done during 2016-2020, and develop a platform and partnership for a subsequent Decade on Healthy Ageing, 2020-2030. It also sets out 5 strategic objectives and identifies actions for Member States, the WHO secretariat and other Partners.

This includes Strategic objective 5 “Improving measuring, monitoring and research” and the accompanying World Health Assembly resolution mandate for the WHO secretariat by 2020 “to prepare global status report on healthy ageing for submission to the 73rd World Health Assembly, reflecting agreed upon standards and metrics and new evidence on what can be done in each strategic theme, to inform and provide baseline data for a Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020-2030.”

Building up and channelling research to implement strategy. Addressing research, WHO convened on 5-6 October, 2017, a high level strategic meeting “Building a Global Research Agenda for Healthy Ageing” at its Headquarters in Geneva with participants representing all six WHO geographic regions and a range of institutions from higher, mid and lower resource settings. These included research funding, policy and implementation institutions, including national medical/health research councils, public and private research funders, and a sub-set of existing WHO Collaborating Centres¹ working on ageing and health (WHO CCs). A review of evidence gaps in the [World Report on Ageing and Health](#) and a global public consultation on research priorities for healthy ageing, informed this meeting.

Engagement of research institutions. A half day was dedicated to discuss whether strengthening existing WHO CCs and extending collaboration with other interested research implementation institutions, is needed and relevant to advance research aligned with the objectives and goals of the [WHO Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health \(GSAP\)](#), in particular setting up the Decade for Healthy Ageing.

¹ WHO collaborating centres are institutions such as research institutes, parts of universities or academies, which are designated by the WHO Director-General to carry out activities in support of the Organization's programmes. More here: <http://www.who.int/collaboratingcentres/en/>



Systematically develop WHO Collaborating Centre network. Participants agreed that building on bilateral collaborations between research institutions and WHO's seven main offices, is desirable. A network could channel and catalyse relatively quickly, new initiatives to fill gaps, advance WHO priorities, encourage innovations, and strengthen capacity in countries, working with WHO headquarters, regional and country offices. WHO's unit overseeing the administration of more than 800 WHO Collaborating Centers worldwide, summarized strengths and lessons learnt from 15 existing networks of WHO CCs.²

In October 2017, participants recommended a systematic process to develop a new network for Healthy Ageing, that would:

- a) involve from the beginning, existing WHO Collaborating Centres and other institutions interested and able to participate in the new research network; and
- b) develop a concrete work plan and objectives that advances implementation of the WHO Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health, and the strengths and ambitions of this new network. This should identify contributions by 2020, and aims for 2030.

Moreover, it was recommended that University of Zurich would support systematic preparations and organization of a first meeting of interested network members, on behalf of WHO. This was later confirmed within WHO, and enabled through support from the Velux Stiftung.

WHO and University of Zurich are delighted that the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAGW), agreed to host the meeting in July at its headquarters in Bern. It is relevant to highlight that the SAGW is actively supporting the implementation of the Global Strategy and Action Plan objectives in Switzerland, and launched the National a+ Swiss Platform Ageing Society in September 2017.

Preparation for this meeting. Identifying potential institutions first drew on the WHO Collaborating Centre database. All WHO CCs with direct or indirect relevance to ageing and the healthy ageing framework for action put forth in the WHO Global Report on Ageing and Health and the Global Strategy, were identified and heads of institutions invited to attend. WHO senior staff within the Department of Ageing and Life Course, the regional focal points on ageing and health in each of WHO's six regional offices, and the WHO Centre for Health Development, in Kobe, Japan, also recommended inclusion of existing WHO CCs and other appropriate institutions. In addition, heads of institutions planning to become a WHO CC as well as a selection of heads of research councils and funding agencies were also invited. Interested institutions were proposed 2 meeting dates, in July and September 2018. Slightly more indicated availability in July. **Annex 1 lists participants**, and those who are committed but unavailable to participate in the July meeting.

To understand existing research activities, begin to identify added value and shape the meeting agenda, all heads of institutions were interviewed prior to the meeting based on a standard discussion guide. **Annex 2 is the proposed agenda** and reflects these preparations.

II. Meeting Objective

By bringing together interested network members, the objective of the meeting is two-fold. First is to understand what institutions are doing through research to promote and facilitate the implementation of the WHO Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health. Second, is to agree on the added value of the network and develop a clear work plan for 2018-2020 in line with

² Described further here: <http://www.who.int/collaboratingcentres/networks/en/>



WHO's mandate. In particular, develop the basis for a multi-country study to inform a baseline report for the Decade of Healthy Ageing.

III. Expected Outcome of the Meeting

Taking stock of existing activities and reflecting advance preparation and discussions, there will be:

- a consensus on the key aims, strategies and tasks of the new WHO network to support the implementation of the WHO Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health. This will be informed by the identification of gaps, strengths and WHO mandate including setting up the Decade for Healthy Ageing 2021-2030.
- shared understanding on its relation with current terms of reference of existing WHO Collaborating Centers, other consortiums, such as the International Consortium of Metrics and Evidence, or other platforms, etc., and the concrete, added value of the network.
- the basis to develop a clear work plan for 2018-2020 in line with WHO's mandate, in particular a multi-country study to inform a baseline report for the Decade of Healthy Ageing. This will be put in practice through the identification of next steps and responsibilities until 2020.

The consensus derived during the meeting will be shared with the heads of those institutions who have also expressed interest in contributing to the network but were unable to attend, and then confirmed by **September 2018**.

A key component will be a written agreement on a research plan to advance Healthy Ageing metrics and monitoring to measure Healthy Ageing (intrinsic capacity, environments, functional ability), as well as care dependency,³ including reanalysis of existing data, and through a multi-country study, new data collection, calibration and innovation studies (expected in 6 countries with some results by early 2020). This multi-country study could also serve as a platform for other investigations addressing the themes of the WHO Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health, if possible.

IV. Towards Identifying Areas of Focus and Added Value

Four steps were taken prior to the meeting to frame the agenda and prepare the meeting towards reaching its objectives, outlined in **Annex 3**. Based on these, the meeting will consider what this new network can do together – with regard to concrete research activities that inform specific services and products.

The following themes and tasks emerged from the pre-workshop interviews conducted with participants:

- a) Clarify **optimal ways to organize the network** and situate it in relation to existing centers and networks
- b) Improve the **use of existing datasets** by, e.g., mapping variables to Healthy Aging constructs, provide low-barrier access to datasets through portals, provide access to data sets across borders, build capacity for multilevel longitudinal analyses, determine sampling

³ Selected by WHO and endorsed by the World Health Assembly in May 2018, to monitor impact within its new, 13th Global Programme of Work endorsed by the World Health Assembly in May 2018.



characteristics of existing studies, widely acceptable technical solutions for data management shared by individuals and researchers

- c) **Conduct research to advance Healthy Ageing metrics** and monitoring to measure Healthy Ageing (intrinsic capacity, environments, functional ability), as well as care dependency⁴, including reanalysis of existing data, and in a multi-country study
- d) Establish **methods to measure healthy aging in context**, e.g., 6+ country study on healthy aging profiles combining traditional healthy aging measures with contextualized activity measures using portable technology
- e) Determine the **economic case** of investing in healthy aging including financial effects, develop ways to calculate the effects on social innovation, equality, equal access, self-determination. Making the case of focusing on function versus focusing on disease, of distinguishing short-, mid-, and long-term effects, demonstrating the potential of hard- and software application development for the economy, and of developing scenarios and micro-simulations with multiple indicators suggests the development of a concept for making the economic cases
- f) Formulate an **innovation challenge** to speed up knowledge gain on integrated care in multimorbidity. Generally, a **“need for speed”** is recognized, i.e., with immediately available resources many tasks identified could be provided by network members quickly
- g) **Build local, national, and international interdisciplinary research capacity** with expertise from health research, clinical research, data science, and engineering and stakeholder participation to exploit opportunities of IT and technology developments and to draw on large interest of computer sciences, and engineering as well as the private sector to contribute to healthy aging agenda
- h) Use the network as a **reverse innovation and best practice exchange repository** where high-resource can learn from low-resource, North from South, all from global perspectives. The repository concept underlines that measures and interventions must be systematically contextualized
- i) Need for **conceptual refinement of healthy aging concept**. Concept can be understood on the level of individuals in context, but helpful also to apply on the level of communities, further refinement of profiles idea combining indicators used in everyone with context- and individual-specific measures, consider talking about three complementary paradigms on healthy aging versus changing one paradigm
- j) Help establishing within research community, decision-makers and public, that the appropriate and rational **gold standards for healthy aging research** that include persons with and without any diseases are contextualization, focus on functional ability stabilization, community-orientation and participation of stakeholders

The workshop will help to identify innovations, responsibilities and next steps both in the short-term towards a multi-country study to advance metrics and monitoring of healthy ageing, and longer-term perspective. This will include what the network can do with existing capacities, and what it could do with additional resources.

⁴ Selected by WHO and endorsed by the World Health Assembly in May 2018, to monitor impact within its new, 13th Global Programme of Work endorsed by the World Health Assembly in May 2018.