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# DEVELOPING AN ETHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR HEALTHY AGEING

Report of a WHO meeting  
Tübingen, Germany, 18 March 2017



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WHO/HIS/IER/REK/GHE/2017.4

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Design and layout: Inis Communication – [www.iniscommunication.com](http://www.iniscommunication.com)

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# Acknowledgements

WHO extends its thanks to Hans-Jörg Ehni, Urban Wiesing and Selma Kadi at the Institute for Ethics and History of Medicine of the University of Tübingen, Germany, who were supported by the Institutional Strategy of the University of Tübingen (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, ZUK 63), for hosting the meeting and supporting the attendance of several of the participants. The report of the meeting was prepared by Dr Laszlo Kovacs and Dr Hans-Jörg Ehni with support from Dr Abha Saxena of the Global Health Ethics team (Department of Information, Evidence and Research in the Health Systems and Innovation cluster) at WHO. Dr Andreas Reis (Global Health Ethics team) provided critical comments on the final manuscript. Stimulating discussions with Dr John Beard, Director of the Department of Ageing and Life Course at WHO, led to organization of the meeting, for which the team is grateful.

We acknowledge with thanks the additional resources provided by Age International for the meeting and the report. We also thank those participants who used their own funding to participate in the meeting and contribute to the discussions.

The Global Health Ethics team thanks Mr Johannes Koehler, intern at WHO, for carefully reading the manuscript and providing useful comments. The rapporteur of the meeting was Dr Laszlo Kovacs.

# Executive summary

Today, people live longer than ever. The rising number of older people is leading to radical social change, including challenges for global health and health care systems. This development was addressed in the *World report on ageing and health* published by WHO in 2015, followed by the Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health 2016–2020, which provides strategies and policy options for Member States to support people in living not only longer but also healthier lives. These documents indicate that some issues of healthy ageing require conceptual and ethical exploration. For this purpose, a scoping meeting was organized by WHO on 18 March 2017 at the University of Tübingen, Germany. Various experts in the fields of bioethics, gerontology, public health and other social and medical sciences were invited. This report presents the content of the presentations and summarizes the achievements of the meeting.

Participants agreed on the first steps towards an ethical framework for healthy ageing. The target groups of the framework are the older persons themselves and the stakeholders responsible for their health and well-being, such as family members, professional carers, institutions, communities and local and national

governments. All are responsible for contributing to ensuring conditions that help older people do and be what they value. These conditions are shaped by many considerations, including changing expectations of medical care in older age, a just allocation of medical resources, ensuring real possibilities for the participation of older people in social life, promoting an age-friendly environment that supports the functions valued by older people, ensuring the absence of discrimination and abuse in both personal relations and social structures, and having a deep understanding of the life-course, especially the meaning of older age, and respect for its special existential dimensions.

An ethical framework could increase awareness of these issues, help to reshape moral and social attitudes to old age and provide a tool that could be applied consistently by various stakeholders. The meeting was convened to identify the elements of such an ethical framework.



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