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Implementation of the WGA work programme in 2015

Implementation of the Work Programme of the Working Group on Ageing in 2015

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Working Group on Ageing (WGA) was established in 2008 as an intergovernmental mechanism to facilitate implementation of the UNECE Regional Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA/RIS) and the follow-up activities to the 2007 UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in León, Spain.
2. The Vienna Ministerial Declaration (ECE/AC.30/2012/3), adopted by 50 member States at the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in September 2012 (Vienna, Austria), reaffirmed the mandate of WGA and provided guidance to its work programme for the third MIPAA/RIS implementation cycle.
3. Taking into account the goals and measures outlined by the Vienna Ministerial Declaration, the Working Group, at its sixth meeting on 25–26 November 2013, agreed upon main elements of its programme of work for 2014–2017 (ECE/WG.1/2013/2) as well as on the main outputs/activities for 2014–2015 planned under the Housing, Land Management and Population subprogramme (ECE/EX/2015/L.9).
4. This document is prepared for the Eighth WGA meeting. It addresses the implementation of the programme of work in 2015, including the launch of the third cycle of the review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS and main outputs for the key areas of activity: policy briefs with good practice examples; capacity development; monitoring implementation of MIPAA/RIS and strengthening the evidence base for policymaking.



II. Implementation of the main elements of the work programme for 2015

A. Launch of the third cycle of MIPAA/RIS implementation and of preparations for the Ministerial Conference in 2017

5. On 1 June 2015 the Secretariat launched the regional review and appraisal exercise for the third MIPAA/RIS cycle by disseminating the guidelines for national reports to be prepared in 2016.¹ The guidelines are addressed to the national focal points and other stakeholders and are complemented with a list of proposed indicators of active ageing for the statistical annex. The final draft of the guidelines was prepared by the Chair of the Working Group together with the Secretariat taking into account the suggestions made by the discussion groups during the Seventh meeting of WGA and comments provided by the Bureau.

6. The early issuance of the guidelines for national reports – seventeen months before the report submission deadline of 31 October 2016 - is in accordance with the agreed timing of major milestones for the third cycle of MIPAA/RIS review and appraisal and the lead-up to the 2017 UNECE Ministerial Conference on ageing. The schedule also foresees a preliminary agreement on a date and theme of the Ministerial Conference during the Eighth WGA meeting. The initial theme proposals were discussed during the Bureau meeting in May 2015 and a list of suggested topics has been sent out by the Secretariat to the national focal points prior to the Eighth WGA meeting in order to facilitate the debates by the discussion groups in the course of the meeting.

B. Policy Briefs with good practice examples

7. The series of Policy Briefs on Ageing provide information on policies and promote exchange of good practice examples among member States regarding different areas of the MIPAA/RIS. The Policy Briefs integrate a wealth of contributions and experiences from member States. All published Policy Briefs are available on the UNECE website.²

8. Since the Seventh meeting of WGA in November 2014, one additional Policy Brief on the topic “Dignity and non-discrimination for persons with dementia” was prepared with the help of an external expert thanks to the German donation to the Ageing fund. The extended outline of the Brief was presented and discussed at the WGA Bureau meeting in May 2015 and the draft of the Brief was sent out for comments to all national focal points who responded to the call to provide good practice examples in this area. This issue of Policy Brief was launched on 1 October – International Day of Older Persons.

9. In September 2015, the Secretariat started work on the next Policy Brief, which, as decided at the Seventh WGA meeting in 2014, is focusing on the impacts of migration on ageing, ageing migrants and migrant care workers. The annotated outline for this Policy Brief will be presented at the Eighth meeting of WGA.

¹ Available from <http://www.unece.org/population/mipaa/reviewandappraisal.html>

² Available from <http://www.unece.org/population/ageing/policybriefs.html>

C. Capacity development

1. Road Maps for Mainstreaming Ageing

10. Road Maps for Mainstreaming Ageing, developed in collaboration with member States at their request, provide a guide through which the respective member State can enhance implementation of the commitments of MIPAA/RIS taking into account socio-economic specificities of the country.

11. The first two Road Maps developed for Armenia (2011) and the Republic of Moldova (2012) were taken up for implementation by the respective governments. The latest Road Map for mainstreaming Ageing in Georgia was finalized and launched at the Seventh meeting of WGA in November 2014. The printed version of it was published in June 2015.

12. In July 2015, the Secretariat presented the main recommendations of the Road Map at the conference “Ageing Policy in Georgia” in Tbilisi, organized by the Healthcare and Social Issues Committee of the Parliament of Georgia in cooperation with the UNFPA Georgia Office and some other partners. The conference participants – members of Parliament, representatives of relevant ministries, academia, United Nations Agencies and international and non-governmental organizations – adopted a resolution calling “to **create** a multi-sectoral working group that, based on the recommendations of the Road Map, will develop an action plan on ageing within one year’s time that will ensure integration of the ageing issue into all governmental policies and programs.” This group will be led by the Healthcare and Social Issues Committee of the Parliament of Georgia in cooperation with the government. ECE will provide advisory support together with the UNFPA Georgia Office and other relevant agencies.

13. The Healthcare and Social Issues Committee of the Parliament of Georgia also sponsored the opening of the exhibition of photographs “Take Care of Time: Ageing in Georgia seen through the eyes of its older citizens” in the Queen Tamar Hall of the Parliament. This exhibition, commissioned by ECE with the support of UNFPA country office, was first presented in Geneva at the Palais des Nations in November 2014.

14. The Terms of Reference for Road Maps state that “depending upon the availability of funds, an additional evaluation mission could be carried out by ECE after at least one year of the implementation of the national Road Map. The mission may serve to examine progress made in implementing the Road Map”. In 2015, the Secretariat prepared a proposal for an evaluation of the Road Map implementation in Armenia, three years after the formal adoption of the Plan of Action by the Government. The proposal was supported by the WGA Bureau at its meeting in May 2015, and Sweden agreed to fund the mission as part of its contribution to the Ageing fund. The Secretariat initiated preparations for the evaluation and, after consulting with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Armenia, decided to carry out the evaluation mission during the first part of 2016.

2. Workshops

15. A regional capacity-development workshop on addressing data gaps for active ageing indicators is planned to be held on 18 November, back-to-back with the Eighth meeting of WGA. It is organized thanks to the financial support from Sweden and is aimed at ECE countries outside of the European Union. The workshop, with the help of experts, seeks to provide consultations on identifying data sources for calculation of the active ageing indicators, and discuss the possible solutions for missing data. Bringing together the statisticians and national focal points on ageing is expected to produce an indirect positive

effect of furthering national inter-agency cooperation and thus facilitating the preparation of the national reports on the MIPAA/RIS implementation during the third cycle.

16. In May 2015, the Secretariat took an active role in the preparation and conduct of a national seminar “The Active Ageing Index: the Lithuanian context”, hosted by the Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The seminar was organized in cooperation with the Ministry and the European Commission, and aimed to assess the extent to which the potential of older people in Lithuania is currently used and to identify areas for the country’s active ageing policy focus in short-to-medium term.

D. Monitoring implementation of MIPAA/RIS and strengthening the evidence base for policymaking

1. Indicators on active ageing

17. The second phase of the Active Ageing Index (AAI-II) project by the ECE Population Unit and the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion continues through December 2015. The work is being implemented jointly with the Southampton University, United Kingdom, and with advice from the Expert Group on the Active Ageing Index.

18. Under the AAI-II project the following activities were implemented in 2015:

(a) The geographical coverage of AAI was extended by producing indicators on active ageing and computing the index for Canada, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland as well as completing the pilot studies for Serbia and Turkey. The results of AAI for Turkey were examined during an advisory field mission in September 2015. For both groups of countries methodological adjustments had to be made and alternative data gathered for some of the indicators.

(b) The time coverage of AAI was extended for the 28 European Union countries by producing and releasing the indices for the three distinct periods: 2010, 2012 and 2014 (based on data of 2008, 2010 and 2012 respectively). Similar calculations were performed also for selected non-EU countries.

(c) An International seminar “Building an evidence base for active ageing policies: Active Ageing Index and its potential” was organized in cooperation with the European Commission and the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing and took place in Brussels on 16–17 April 2015. The seminar gathered more than 150 participants from 35 countries including from as far afield as India, China and Argentina. An analytical report³ presenting the 2014 AAI results for 28 EU countries, their detailed analysis, and the analysis of trends over a four-year period (2008–2012) was launched at the opening of the seminar.

(d) Outreaching to stakeholders was stepped up: the AAI results and their trends analysis were presented by the project partners at a number of international and regional events, consultations held with national/subnational authorities (Lithuania, Turkey, Biscay province in Spain), as well as with international agencies (World Bank, World Health Organization, United Nations Population Fund, etc.).

³ UNECE / European Commission (2015) “Active Ageing Index 2014: Analytical Report”, Report prepared by Asghar Zaidi of Centre for Research on Ageing, University of Southampton and David Stanton, under contract with United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (Geneva), co-funded by European Commission’s Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (Brussels). Available from: <http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/AAI/VI.+Documentation>.

(e) Two meetings of the Expert Group on the Active Ageing Index were held in 2015 discussing/proposing the methodological amendments, analytical insights, and further ways of promoting the use of AAI as a tool for tracking progress in the implementation of MIPAA/RIS and for an evidence-based policymaking in active ageing.

(f) A public wiki page dedicated to AAI has been maintained and regularly updated including project presentations for external dissemination, a simulation tool with newest data, and a page devoted to the International Seminar “Building an evidence base for active ageing policies: Active Ageing Index and its potential”.

2. The Generations and Gender Programme (GGP)

19. The Secretariat has continued to act as a clearinghouse for the administration of GGP. The programme includes national longitudinal surveys with waves every three-four years. Harmonised first wave data are currently available for 19 countries (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation and Sweden). The second wave data are available for 10 countries (Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, and the Netherlands) and the harmonisation process is planned for the third wave data from a number of countries. Survey microdata are complemented by information on policies and legal frameworks in different countries which are stored in the Contextual Data Base.

20. GGP is an important data source for policy-relevant research on socio-demographic trends and processes in the ECE region. The Programme is also a rich source of evidence for the evaluation of MIPAA/RIS implementation, particularly in the area of intergenerational relations. In collaboration with its scientific partner, the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI), ECE promotes the use of evidence from GGP data as a basis for policymaking.

21. ECE processes applications submitted by scientists and experts who wish to use GGP data for their research.⁴ There are now over 2,500 data users for GGP which is a 22 per cent increase as compared with the last year.

22. The ECE Secretariat also regularly contributes to updating the bibliography of GGP-based research. The bibliography has now been integrated into the main GGP website (www.ggp-i.org).⁵ Under the new format, users can enter new bibliographic sources directly online. Entries are checked and approved by ECE or NIDI. The bibliography currently has references to about 1,100 GGP-based publications.

23. The ECE Secretariat continues to coordinate the GGP Council of Partners and is organizing a meeting of this group on 2 December 2015 in Vienna, Austria, back-to-back with the third GGP users conference (30 November – 1 December).

III. Conclusions

24. The Vienna Ministerial Declaration (2012) provides an important framework of reference and helps to streamline activities in implementing and monitoring MIPAA/RIS in the ECE region. The guidelines issued in 2015 for national focal points and other

⁴ Data can be accessed by registered users at www.ggp-i.org.

⁵ Available from <http://www.ggp-i.org/bibliography.html>.

stakeholders in ECE countries for reporting on the third cycle of MIPAA/RIS implementation are based on this framework.

25. The key position of the Working Group on Ageing as the facilitator of MIPAA/RIS implementation in the region has been once more confirmed by the extension of its mandate to the end of 2017. In 2015, WGA and its Secretariat have produced substantive outputs and have provided a valuable framework for networking among national focal points to exchange information and share experiences. This helped a number of member States to adjust/update their policies on ageing and enhance the compliance with the commitments of MIPAA/RIS and the Vienna Ministerial Declaration.

26. The support by member States to WGA and its Secretariat was also emphasized by monetary contributions to the ECE Ageing fund: about USD 117,000 were received from Germany, Norway and Sweden since the Sixth WGA meeting in November 2013. These funds have been used for activities foreseen in the WGA programme of work, in particular the preparation of Policy Briefs, the Road Maps on Mainstreaming Ageing, the organization of a capacity-building workshop as well as for supporting the participation of several national focal points from less affluent member States in the WGA meetings. The extra-budgetary funding received under the joint management project with the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion provided the necessary resources to complete the second phase of the Active Ageing Index project.
