

# Mainstreaming Ageing

## Germany

### About

In 2007, the German Federal Government developed a national plan of action (“Challenges and Opportunities of Ageing Societies”) to implement the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and the Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS). In keeping with the 10 voluntary commitments contained in RIS, the plan of action lists both measures taken and planned, as well as statements made by the Federal Government. As Germany’s is a federal structure, support and care for older people are also the responsibility of the *Laender* (federal states) and the local authorities are responsible for specific support and measures. However, the impact of MIPAA and RIS was to motivate policy action on several levels, also under the influence of senior citizens organisations, to improve the quality of life of older persons and strengthen solidarity between the generations.

In 2012, a demographic strategy was published by the Federal Government and updated in 2015 (“Every Age Counts”). The Federal Government along with the *Laender*, local authorities, scientists, representatives of business, civil society and social partners were involved in developing and updating the demographic strategy.

The approach to ageing policy in Germany is a mix between general measures to facilitate adaption to demographic change, on the one hand, and variety of specific measures on the other hand. As different regions in Germany have quite heterogeneous demographic conditions, a wide range of specific measures exists to deal with the discrete demographic challenges they present.

### Structures

Ageing mainstreaming is applied at different levels: national, regional and local.

At national level, Directorate-General 3 “Demographic Change, Senior Citizens, Social Welfare” of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, is responsible for coordinating ageing policy at national level and for implementing MIPAA/RIS in Germany. Other ministries also deal with specific areas of ageing. While responsibility for the pension and social systems lies with the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Health bears the main responsibility for the health and long-term care system and the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community for demographic strategy. All responsible ministries, *Laender*, institutions and NGOs dealing with ageing-specific issues are invited to contribute to the periodic reviews on MIPAA/RIS implementation.

The 16 *Laender* also have coordinating ministries that monitor and assess the implementation of the action taken by their governments at *Laender*-level. Furthermore, different structures exist at local and regional level. Many of them maintain offices to coordinate the local governments’ activities in matters of ageing.

### Laws, Policies, and Strategic Framework

As mentioned previously, a national demographic strategy (2015) is in place and the process is monitored by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community. In addition, the 2007 national plan of action to implement MIPAA/RIS (“Challenges and Opportunities of Ageing Societies”) is still in place and the Federal Government is still dedicated to implementing MIPAA/RIS in Germany through additional measures.

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is planning to evaluate the implementation of both RIS and the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration in 2020.

In 2013, in the process of implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Federal Government introduced a youth check to determine how laws will impact the younger generation. In addition, in 2014, the Government introduced a “demographic check” to examine each new piece of legislation for its impact on demographic factors.

## **Methods and tools**

### *Data collection and analysis*

The Federal Statistical Office collects and provides substantial data and population statistics on different areas of life, such as demography and the economy that can be used to generate ageing statistics. Furthermore, the Federal Ministry of Health possesses statistics on persons who receive long-term care. In addition, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth funds the German Centre of Gerontology, an institute for scientific research and documentation in the fields of social and behavioural ageing research. That institute also provides regular data in the form of studies such as the “German Ageing Survey” and the “German Survey on Volunteering” that are also made public.

If a gap in data is discovered, the different actors and scientists discuss it and how best it can be closed.

### *Awareness raising, advocacy and education*

Awareness-raising training seminars are held for government officials at the different levels. These are organised partly through the various Ministries at national level, especially for staff in transition to retirement, and include topics such as dementia, long term care, how to deal with family members with care needs, relevant regulations, and more.

The Federal Academy of Public Administration also offers courses for government officials at national level (for example on health and leadership amidst demographic change, the potential of persons aged 55+, etc.). There are special units at the Ministries dealing with mobility, housing, social security, health, people with disabilities, long term care, etc. and focusing on older people and age-related questions. These units, which also exist at Land level, have sector-specific concepts on ageing to raise awareness and in some cases also have programmes to show best practice examples for dealing with such questions at different levels.

Population ageing and demographic change have been included in school curricula.

### *Stakeholder engagement*

Stakeholders are consulted on ageing-related issues and are heard as experts in the legislative process. Close cooperation also exists with the umbrella organisation of more than 110 NGOs – the German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations (BAGSO). Regular contact ensures that the needs and interests of older people can be better incorporated into the national policy-making process.

From 2008 to 2013, the Federal Government implemented an initiative and worked together with the economic sector, media, commerce and business, as well as scientists to promote and develop products and services for all generations. Owing to demographic change and the fact that business itself discovered age-friendly products and services to be useful from a commercial perspective, the initiative was discontinued.

From 2006 onwards, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth held several competitions to obtain images and cartoons relating to perceptions of age and stereotypes about ageing. This approach ensured wide participation among society and the media. Subsequently, the touring exhibition “What’s old anyway?” was designed to raise awareness about perceptions of ageing and ageism. The exhibition tours throughout Germany and is also available meanwhile in English and French for presentation at international events.

At local level, voluntary senior citizen councils involve older persons in the policymaking process. As many older people are quite active, healthy and interested in the various processes, especially at local level, the participation rate is quite high.

#### *Age-sensitive analysis, generation-proof / age-sensitive / age-responsive policy development*

No tools exist to screen and evaluate existing laws, policies and programmes to ensure that the needs of all generations are taken into account. Age-sensitive analysis has only been institutionalised for new laws and policies.

The legislation process comprises an expert hearing during which scientists and organisations that deal with the specific topic are invited to the parliamentary committees to give their opinion and answer questions. As mentioned before, in the process of implementing the UN-Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 2013, the Federal Government introduced a “youth check” to determine how laws affect the younger generation. In addition, in 2014, a “demographic check” was introduced by the Federal Government to examine each new piece of legislation for its impact on demographic issues prior to its adoption.

#### *Generation-proof / age-sensitive / age-responsive budgeting*

In order to achieve sustainability and preclude any fear of burdening future generations, solidarity and justice among generations is an important component of the public pension system in Germany. Every change is also scrutinized to determine whether it is age-sensitive and does not burden one generation at the expense of another.

In Germany’s public pension system, the pensions of those who have already retired is paid from the pension fund contributions of those currently in employment. Consequently, there must be a balance between the contributions paid by the working generation and the benefits (pension level) that the retired generations withdraw from the system.

#### *Monitoring and performance assessment*

In 2007, the German Federal Government developed a national plan of action (“Challenges and Opportunities of Ageing Societies”) to implement MIPAA/RIS in Germany, in keeping with the 10 voluntary commitments contained in RIS. In 2020/21 an Interim Monitoring/Evaluation is planned to assess the process and its implementation. Every five years, Germany also prepares the national MIPAA/RIS report within the framework of the UNECE Working Group on Ageing.

For some activities (e.g. reform of the pension, healthcare or long-term care systems, or the participation of older persons in the labour market) regular data is available with which to monitor the implementation process. Furthermore, some processes and programs are evaluated after some time to determine their impact on society and on the different target groups for which they were introduced.

## Good practices

The pilot project "Demografiewerkstatt Kommunen" (Municipality Workshop on Demography) uses the example of eight local authorities to examine how the consequences of demographic change can be shaped by the administration, with the involvement of the population. The results and findings of this five-year project will be incorporated into the Federal Government's subsequent demography strategy.

Older persons are showing increasing interest in new forms of shared housing – living both with peers and with younger people in multi-generation homes. Since late 2015, the "Gemeinschaftlich wohnen, selbstbestimmt leben" (Shared Housing, Self-Determined Living) pilot programme has promoted selected housing projects that serve as best-practice examples and has encouraged their replication. The pilot program places particular importance on establishing close links between the housing projects and the local community and environment. The idea is to ensure that the projects enhance the quality of life within the respective municipalities, urban neighbourhoods and rural areas – and that the projects themselves benefit in return, thus improving prevailing conditions to enable longer, self-determined lives for the people living there.

Conceived as part of the Images of Ageing Program, the touring exhibition "What's 'old' anyway?" (original title in German: "Was heißt schon alt?") was launched by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in the quest to help society embrace a fresh and differentiated image of ageing. This has become necessary because the prevailing images of old age tend to be out of sync with the diverse life plans realised by older persons today and the strengths they possess. Importantly, moreover, images of ageing do not only inform cross-generational interaction in an ageing society, but also our personal expectations of what our own journey into old age might look like. This project invites young and old to review their ideas of ageing and old age and to start sharing their thoughts and ideas. The touring exhibition is available, free of charge, in German, English and French.

Nearly every German municipality has a multi-generational centre. In total, the country is home to approximately 550 such centres. They facilitate contact and strengthen cooperation among neighbours. People of every age and different cultural and religious backgrounds come together, engage in dialogue and can become active in these multi-generational centres. People who would otherwise never meet in daily life experience and shape community here – in language exchanges, cooking courses, afternoon care support or other activities.