



Economic Commission for Europe**Standing Working Group on Ageing****Thirteenth meeting**

Geneva, 22 and 23 November 2021 (hybrid)

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

The Standing Working Group on Ageing work programme for the fourth implementation cycle of the Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing – implemented activities in 2021 and plans for 2022**Implementation of the work programme of the Standing Working Group on Ageing in 2021****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 the realization of the ECE Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA/RIS). On 24 July 2020, following resolution 2020/19 of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the revised terms of reference of WGA updating its mandate and changing its name to Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGGA) came into force.

2. The SWGGA work programme for the fourth implementation cycle of the MIPAA/RIS in 2018-2022 was adopted at the eleventh meeting of the Working Group in November 2018 (ECE/WG.1/2018/2). The Lisbon Ministerial Declaration (ECE/AC.30/2017/2/Rev.1), endorsed by 46 member States at the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in September 2017 (Lisbon, Portugal), is at the basis of this five-year work programme.

3. This document is prepared by the secretariat for the fourteenth SWGGA meeting. It addresses the implementation of the SWGGA programme of work during the year 2021, including the carrying out of the fourth review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS, preparations for the Ministerial Conference in 2022, and main outputs for the key areas of activity: policy seminars; preparation of policy briefs with good practice examples; capacity development; as well as monitoring the implementation of MIPAA/RIS and strengthening the evidence base for policymaking. It also outlines selected planned activities for 2022.



II. Implementation of the main elements of the work programme for 2021

A. Fourth cycle of review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy

1. Review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS implementation

4. Member States are expected to submit to the ECE secretariat their national reports on the progress of MIPAA/RIS implementation at the end of September 2021. The timely submission of national reports and their adherence to the guidelines for national reporting are essential for the secretariat's work on a synthesis report for the fourth review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS.

5. By the time of preparing this note, the majority of ECE member States were actively engaged in drafting national reports and organising consultations with civil society and other stakeholders. Ongoing restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic might however prevent some planned national consultation events and conferences on ageing to take place or be delayed and affect the timeliness of report submission.

6. To support policymakers and civil society actors in designing inclusive stakeholder engagement and participation processes, the secretariat in collaboration with HelpAge International, developed a Guidance note on "Meaningful participation of older persons and civil society in policymaking", issued in August 2021. The Guidance note was informed by the presentations and deliberations during the online workshop on "Making participation meaningful: bringing governments and civil society together" that took place in April 2021.

7. As part of the fourth review and appraisal cycle of MIPAA, the secretariat also provided inputs to the drafting of the Secretary-General report on the "Preliminary assessment of the fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002" to be presented to the Commission for Social Development in February 2022.

8. The decision to prepare the MIPAA/RIS+20 report that focuses on the main achievements and newly emerging issues related to population ageing over the last 20 years was taken at the thirteenth SWGA meeting in November 2020. An outline for the MIPAA/RIS+20 report will be presented at the fourteenth meeting of SWGA.

2. ECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing

9. In July 2020, the Minister for Family and Equal Opportunities of Italy proposed to host the regional Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Rome, Italy, in 2022. The ECE secretariat and the SWGA members welcomed the proposal and are working in close collaboration with Italy to prepare the Conference. The date for the Conference was confirmed at the Bureau meeting in June 2021: it will take place on 16-17 June 2022 and will be preceded by a joint Civil Society and Scientific Research Forum on 15 June 2022. The secretariat and the partners from the Italian Government are currently engaged in the preparation of the Host Country Agreement.

10. An initial concept note for the Ministerial Conference was presented by Italy in 2020. In the course of 2021, a subgroup of the Bureau working on the Conference content in collaboration with the Italian team further elaborated the concept and agreed on the Conference structure including the provisional schedule, agenda and possible composition of panellists. The note on the Conference structure was shared with the Standing Working Group in July 2021 and will be discussed at the SWGA meeting in November.

11. An initial draft of the declaration for the Ministerial Conference was prepared by a dedicated subgroup of the Bureau together with the Italian team and discussed in detail at the Bureau meeting in June 2021. Subsequently, a reviewed version of the zero draft was sent to the Standing Working Group members at the end of July 2021 for comments and suggestions. The Declaration drafting group will review the comments received and will share an updated draft prior to the fourteenth SWGA meeting to facilitate the debates on the declaration text

by the discussion groups during the meeting. Official consultations with member States on the draft will start in December 2021.

B. International cooperation, exchange of experience and policy discussion

1. Policy seminars on ageing

12. The Policy seminars on ageing became a regular part of the SWGA Work Programme 2018-2022 following highly positive feedback by the SWGA members after the first event in November 2018. The seminars are usually held back-to-back with the annual meetings of SWGA. The fourth Policy seminar on ageing will be held on 24 November 2021 on the topic “Ageing in the Digital Era”. The topic was approved by SWGA at its thirteenth meeting in November 2020.

13. The fourth Policy seminar will provide an opportunity for SWGA members to reflect on the promises of digitalisation for ageing populations in the health and care sectors, the labour market, lifelong learning and social participation, as well as autonomy and independence for older persons, whose physical and cognitive abilities are impaired. The discussion will focus on three main policy challenges associated with ageing in the digital era: the need to enhance digital skills and literacy, the need to ensure access to services that increasingly move online, and the protection of human rights. The seminar will be held in a hybrid format accommodating both participation in person and online.

14. Topics for forthcoming policy seminars will be discussed at the fourteenth SWGA meeting. The proposed list of topics will later be shared with member States for ranking in order of priority with the first and second topics chosen for the policy seminars in 2022 and 2023, respectively.

2. Policy briefs

15. The ECE series of Policy Briefs on Ageing provides information on policies and promotes an exchange of good practice examples among member States regarding different areas of MIPAA/RIS. The policy briefs integrate a wealth of contributions and experiences from member States. All published policy briefs are available on the ECE website including numerous translations into national languages provided by the members of SWGA.¹

16. Policy Brief No. 26 on “Ageing in the Digital Era” was issued in July 2021 in support of the fourth Policy seminar discussions. The topic of the issue No. 27 of the Policy Brief series was agreed at the twelfth SWGA meeting in 2019 and will be dedicated to mainstreaming ageing. The topic for the Policy brief issue No. 28 to be prepared in 2022 will be related to the theme of the 2022 Ministerial Conference.

C. Guidelines and policy recommendations, advisory services and capacity-building

1. Guidelines and a toolkit for mainstreaming ageing

17. At its eleventh meeting, the Working Group decided to include the development of guidelines for mainstreaming ageing in its programme of work for 2019-2020 and to establish a task force to guide this work. At its thirteenth meeting in November 2020, SWGA discussed the draft of the guidelines and agreed to finalize and publish them in early 2021. The ECE Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing were issued in March 2021 and were presented by the SWGA Chair (Portugal) at the eleventh session of the Open-ended Working Group for the purpose of strengthening the protection of older people's human rights in New York. To facilitate the operationalization of the guidelines and promote their use at all governance levels, Germany and the Republic of Moldova translated the guidelines into the national languages.

¹ Available from <http://www.unecce.org/population/ageing/policybriefs.html>.

18. The guidelines provide policymakers with suggestions on how to advance or improve their mainstreaming efforts, considering ageing both from a societal and individual life-course perspective. They outline five stages to develop a Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Ageing, with the aim of facilitating the systematic consideration and integration of ageing aspects into broader national policies.

19. A toolkit complementing the Guidelines is under preparation. The pilot version of the toolkit for Stage 1 of the Guidelines will be presented to SWGA at its fourteenth meeting in November 2021. It will be completed in 2022 supporting the development of training materials on mainstreaming ageing in 2022.

2. Road maps for mainstreaming ageing

20. Road maps for mainstreaming ageing, developed in collaboration with member States at their request, provide a guide through which the country in question can enhance implementation of the commitments of MIPAA/RIS taking into account the specificities of the country.

21. In 2019, the Government of Kazakhstan requested ECE to prepare a Road Map in support of developing a national strategy on ageing. A desk study was conducted in late 2019 and was followed by a field mission to Kazakhstan (26-31 January 2020). The work on the Road Map and further consultations with the Government experts were interrupted due to funding issues and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Road Map document is now planned to be finalised in 2021 and will include an assessment of challenges faced by institutional and home-based long-term care during the pandemic. A pilot rapid assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on long-term care for older persons in Kazakhstan was undertaken in December 2020 – February 2021. The findings of the report on the pilot rapid assessment will be presented in an annex to the Road Map.

3. Workshops and webinars

22. Between April and June 2021, ECE organized three online events covering different aspects of the fourth review and appraisal cycle of the implementation of MIPAA/RIS in the ECE region.

23. The first online workshop with the theme of “Making participation meaningful: bringing governments and civil society together” aimed to inform and motivate both governments and civil society organisations to engage in a participatory approach to policymaking in general and to the review of implementing MIPAA/RIS in particular, and discussed what needs to be done to ensure that participation is meaningful. The workshop provided examples of successful strategies on how to collaborate shared by governments, researchers, civil society organisations and United Nations agencies. Participants also discussed barriers that impede innovative and forward-looking approaches. The workshop which took place on 21 April 2021 was attended by close to 200 policymakers, researchers and representatives of civil society organisations and United Nations agencies.

24. The second interactive webinar, held on 19 May 2021, focused on the synergies between MIPAA and related international initiatives in the field of ageing, and encouraged unified reporting as part of the fourth review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS. It provided an opportunity for exchange with experts who lead the work on the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing, the Global Campaign to Combat Ageism and the follow-up to the Secretary-General Policy Brief on the impact of COVID-19 on Older Persons and drew connections between.

25. The third and final webinar of the series, which took place on 16 June 2021, provided an opportunity for national focal points on ageing and colleagues involved in preparing national MIPAA reports to review key aspects of the reporting exercise and clarify any questions. Main topics covered included an overview of the national reporting guidelines, the timeline of the review, as well as an outline for the regional synthesis that will be prepared based on national reports to inform the 2022 Ministerial Conference on Ageing.

26. To support the operationalisation of the Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing an online workshop for policymakers and other stakeholders is planned to take place in the fourth quarter of 2021. It will focus on raising awareness about the core concept and rationale for mainstreaming ageing and steps involved in developing a strategic framework for mainstreaming ageing at the national level.

D. Monitoring the Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and building evidence base for policymaking

Building evidence base for policymaking

27. In December 2020, in the run-up to the fourth review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS, the secretariat completed computation of the 2020 AAI for the European Union countries and the United Kingdom as well as of a number of AAI indicators for Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and North Macedonia. The results were made publicly available on the dedicated AAI WIKI in early 2021. The number of non-EU countries for which AAI is computed has been increasing, with the first-time computation of AAI in Azerbaijan published in January 2021, in a report entitled “Active Ageing Index “AAI” for Azerbaijan: A comparison with EU Countries”. Also, for the first time, the results of “AAI - Kazakhstan 2020” were presented in May 2021 under a project conducted by the UNFPA Kazakhstan office. The 2018 guidelines on the application of AAI in non-EU countries and at the subnational level support these new initiatives. As of July 2021, the Guidelines are also available in Russian thanks to the translation supported by UNFPA.

28. The secretariat has continued to act as a clearinghouse for data administration of the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP) and as a coordinator of the network of national teams’ representatives – the GGP Council of Partners. In this capacity, the ECE secretariat co-organized an online annual meeting of the Council of Partners on 9 June 2021. As the coordinator of the GGP Council of Partners, the ECE secretariat performs a bridging function between those responsible for programme management and development and those in charge of its implementation at the national level. ECE also processes applications by scientists and experts who wish to use GGP microdata data for their research.²

29. The GGP is a leading data source for policy-relevant research on demographic trends and processes in the ECE region. The data and research findings from the GGP have been used for computing AAI indicators in several non-EU countries and supported some policy measures addressing low fertility and intergenerational equity concerns. The GGP data are also used in computing several Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators by several countries.

III. Conclusions

30. The 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration provided an important framework of reference to streamline activities in implementing and monitoring MIPAA/RIS in the ECE region. The key role of the ECE Working Group on Ageing as the facilitator of MIPAA/RIS implementation in the region has been reconfirmed by the ECOSOC resolution 2020/19 that endorsed the revised terms of reference and the change of name to a Standing Working Group on Ageing.

31. The SWGA activities and outputs in 2021 were centred around the fourth review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS implementation as well as the launch and operationalization of the Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing, policy seminar, policy briefs and capacity-building activities.

32. In the course of 2021, SWGA and its secretariat were supporting MIPAA/RIS reviews at national level and lead the preparations for the regional review, which will culminate with

² Data can be accessed by registered users at www.ggp-i.org.

the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Rome, Italy, in June 2022. The format, thematic content and preliminary agenda have been agreed by the Bureau and the host country. A draft of the ministerial declaration will be ready for in-depth discussion at the SWGA annual meeting in November 2021 and - providing agreement on the core elements is reached - the draft declaration will be submitted for the formal consultations with member States in December 2021.

33. The Standing Working Group pursued its commitment to mainstreaming ageing in policy and regulatory frameworks and supported the development of a toolkit and capacity building activities to operationalize the Guidelines for mainstreaming ageing published in March 2021. SWGA and its secretariat also actively used the opportunities for sharing insights and promising practices between governments, research, and civil society networks to leverage the potential of digitalisation for ageing populations, mitigate associated risks and foster the digital inclusion of older persons.

34. Since the thirteenth SWGA meeting, additional financial contributions from Estonia, Germany and Switzerland to the Ageing-Phase III fund in support of the SWGA work programme in 2020-2022 amounted to USD 205,300. The regular budget P2 post that became vacant on 1 January 2021 was filled in the middle of August through the Managed Reassignment Programme.
