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**Meeting with the Chair of the Standing Working Group on Ageing**

**Report by the Chair**

## Report by the Chair of the Standing Working Group on Ageing

1. The Chair of the Standing Working Group on Ageing, Mr. Alfredo Ferrante, is pleased to submit his report to the 127th meeting of the Executive Committee (EXCOM) on 16 March 2023.
2. The report presents highlights of the work undertaken in support of mainstreaming population ageing in national policy and regulatory frameworks and creating an environment that is conducive to the realization of the individual and societal potential of living longer. It covers achievements since the previous report presented in March 2022, and the major activities planned for 2023 and beyond. Further details can be found in the report of the fifteenth meeting of the Standing Working Group on Ageing, ECE/WG.1/2022/2, and the document ECE/WG.1/2022/4 on the Implementation of the Standing Working Group on Ageing work programme in 2022.

### I. Introduction

3. In the ECE region today one in six persons is aged 65 years and older. By 2050, the proportion will be one in four, with every eleventh person being aged 80 and above. The ECE region is clearly at the forefront of the global population ageing megatrend. Guiding and strengthening policymaking by member States to adapt to population ageing and other demographic changes are among the core activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).
4. The work is governed by the Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGA). Its current status and revised Terms of Reference were approved by ECOSOC in July 2020 (E/RES/2020/19). SWGA is composed of National Focal Points on Ageing nominated by the respective governments of ECE member States. The ECE Population Unit acts as the secretariat to SWGA and contributes to the preparation and implementation of the SWGA programme of work. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) representing older persons and/or working in ageing-related areas and the scientific community participate as observers to the Standing Working Group and are represented on the SWGA Bureau. International organizations with programmes related to population ageing also take part in the Standing Working Group as observers.
5. SWGA supports the realization of the policy goals and objectives set out in the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and its Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS), and the subsequent ECE Ministerial Declarations on Ageing. The SWGA Programme of Work for 2018–2022 responded to the goals of the 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration “A Sustainable Society for All Ages: Realizing the potential of living longer”. The programme of work links the implementation and monitoring of MIPAA/RIS with activities addressing the regional/national follow-up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international population-related frameworks. It also contributes to the programme of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing, 2021–2030.
6. The vulnerability of older persons in emergency situations and the malfunctioning of the long-term care systems in the region were brought to light by the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, in many countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has also prompted business and social innovation to ensure the continuity of long-term care and social services for older people and avert social isolation. Through its policy dialogue and exchange of experience, SWGA highlighted the need for investing in strengthening and reforming long-term care systems to ensure ageing with dignity and decent work for those providing care as an essential part of adapting to population ageing.
7. The SWGA work is based on international cooperation, exchange of experience and policy discussion on ageing and intergenerational relations, taking into account ongoing and emerging challenges in an increasingly interconnected, dynamic and digitalized environment

as well as in the face of climate change.

## **II. Achievements over the past twelve months**

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

8. The organization and follow-up of the fifth ECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing and the preparation of the synthesis report on the fourth review and appraisal cycle of MIPAA/RIS were at the centre of the activities of the ECE secretariat and SWGA in 2022. The synthesis report, based on 40 national reports submitted by ECE member States, summarised the trends and achievements in implementing MIPAA/RIS in the ECE region between 2017–2022. The report also includes sections on the contribution of ageing policies to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and on Managing the Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on older persons as well as an extensive statistical annex. The synthesis report was launched at the Ministerial conference and published as part of the Proceedings of the Ministerial Conference on Ageing (ECE/WG.1/41). To mark the 20-year anniversary of MIPAA/RIS, the secretariat also prepared a MIPAA/RIS+20 report, presenting the most important trends related to population ageing, progress achieved over the past 20 years in implementing MIPAA/RIS, as well as an outlook for the way forward (ECE/WG.1/40).

9. Hosted by the Government of Italy, the fifth ECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing took place on 16 and 17 June 2022 in Rome and was attended by 44 member State delegations. It was preceded by a Joint Forum of Civil Society and Scientific Research on 15 June 2022. The conclusions of the Forum’s deliberations and recommendations were formulated in its outcome document, a Joint Declaration of Civil Society and Scientific Research, and presented at the Ministerial Conference. The outcome document of the Ministerial Conference, the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration “A Sustainable World for All Ages: Joining Forces for Solidarity and Equal Opportunities Throughout Life” defines the policy priorities for the fifth implementation cycle of MIPAA/RIS (2022–2027) under three broad policy goals: (1) promoting active and healthy ageing throughout life; (2) ensuring access to long-term care and support for carers and families; and (3) mainstreaming ageing to advance a society for all ages. The same themes guided discussions and exchange of experience at the Ministerial Conference. Full statements and presentations, as well as information on side events organized, are available on the Conference webpage.<sup>1</sup>

10. The Standing Working Group on Ageing and its Bureau were instrumental in preparing the regional review, the Ministerial Conference and its outcome document. In Rome, ECE member States renewed their commitment to the implementation of MIPAA/RIS and to regional cooperation and intergovernmental collaboration in the field of ageing. Recognizing the major economic, social, and digital transitions of the past 20 years since the adoption of MIPAA/RIS, and to better respond to emerging challenges related to population ageing, ECE member States entrusted the SWGA with the task of updating RIS and exploring the possibility of updating MIPAA (para. 47 of the Ministerial Declaration).

### **B. International cooperation, exchange of experience and policy discussion**

11. Along with the activities related to the MIPAA/RIS review process over the last year, SWGA and its secretariat also actively used opportunities for sharing insights and promising practices between governments, research, and civil society networks on long-term care. The Standing Working Group further pursued its commitment to mainstreaming ageing in policy and regulatory frameworks and supported capacity-building activities to operationalize the Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing, launched in March 2021.

#### **1. Policy seminar on “Quality in Long-term Care”**

<sup>1</sup> <https://unece.org/info/Population/events/362733>.

12. The fifth Policy Seminar on Ageing took place on 23 November 2022 and was dedicated to the topic of quality in long-term care. Forty-four participants attended the event, including delegates from 19 ECE member States. The seminar focused on the issues of meeting the growing needs for human and material resources, and of quality assurance and monitoring. Speakers from Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Tajikistan, Türkiye, and the World Health Organization (WHO) shared innovative solutions and practices. Further country examples were included in a background paper available on the meeting page of the policy seminar.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. Policy briefs on ageing**

13. In 2022, one new policy brief on ageing was published: “Mainstreaming Ageing – Revisited” (No. 27, February 2022). An outline for Policy Brief No.28 on older persons in vulnerable situations was discussed by the SWGA at the fifteenth meeting on 21 and 22 November 2022 and will be issued during the first quarter of 2023.

14. Policy briefs on ageing are prepared on topics selected by the members of the SWGA. They suggest policy measures and promote the exchange of good practice examples among member States. Many of the briefs are translated into several languages (French, German, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian and Spanish) by the member States.

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

### **1. Road maps for mainstreaming ageing**

15. In 2022, the Republic of Moldova requested ECE to conduct a ten-year evaluation of the implementation of its Road Map adopted in 2012 and to inform the development of a new programme on ageing in 2022. The evaluation was carried out during the second quarter of 2022, based on a desk review of research evidence and policy documents and stakeholder consultations carried out through a written survey, interviews, and focus-group discussions in April and May 2022. A report with recommendations was submitted to the Government in July 2022.

### **2. Capacity development on mainstreaming ageing**

16. To support the operationalization and dissemination of the ECE Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing issued in 2021, a short, interactive online training course was developed in 2022 and tested by a number of volunteers of the SWGA. The course, aimed at policymakers and the interested public, provides a brief introduction to mainstreaming ageing, to the main recommended stages in developing a strategic framework for mainstreaming ageing and to the proposed mechanisms to mainstream ageing in policies at the national level. Based on the feedback received it is being revised and will be finalised during the first quarter of 2023.

17. A series of training workshops focusing on age-sensitive analysis and the integration of ageing aspects into broader policies have been organized for national and local civil servants in the Republic of Moldova to build capacity for mainstreaming ageing among policymakers. The workshops were organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) country office and took place in October 2022 and February 2023.

18. The ECE Secretariat raised awareness about the ECE Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing through contributions to national workshops organized in Germany and Türkiye in December 2022 and an internal training event on age equality mainstreaming organized by the European Commission.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://unece.org/info/Population/events/362735>.

#### **D. Monitoring implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy and strengthening the evidence base for policymaking**

19. The ECE secretariat has continued to act as a clearinghouse for data administration of the Generations and Gender Programme (GPP) and coordinated the network of national teams' representatives – the GGP Council of Partners. In this capacity, the ECE secretariat co-organized the annual meeting, which was held online on 21 June 2022 and participated in a Consortium Board meeting on 24 and 25 October 2022. The SWGA was briefed on new developments in the GGP and its relevance for evidence-based policymaking at the national level at its fifteenth meeting in November 2022.

20. 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 Active Ageing 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 a number of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators by several countries.

#### **E. Partnerships and communication**

21. The ECE secretariat has continued to be involved in the activities of the Joint Programme on Ageing, a regional initiative developed in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the World Health Organization, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and HelpAge International and has collaborated with other United Nations entities in the United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Ageing (IAGA) to promote the system-wide implementation of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030).

22. The ECE secretariat also continued to engage with civil society and the research community. In 2022, the ECE Secretariat collaborated with the NGO Committee on Ageing Geneva to commemorate the 2022 International Day of Older Persons through a co-organized online event on the topic of older persons and climate change.

23. To support the dissemination of the outputs of the Standing Working Group and the results of the Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Rome, the secretariat issued three press releases, issued newsletters for the participants of the Ministerial Conference, and shared outputs and results via social media.

### **III. Major planned activities for 2023 and beyond**

24. In 2023, the SWGA and ECE secretariat will continue to support the implementation of MIPAA/RIS in ECE member States. The SWGA will also develop a new multi-year programme of work for the fifth cycle of MIPAA/RIS implementation in 2023–2027 based on the policy priorities agreed upon at the ECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing with the Rome Ministerial Declaration in June 2022.

#### **A. Completion of the fourth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy in the ECE region and follow-up to the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration**

25. The global review of MIPAA implementation during the fourth cycle concluded on 8 February 2023 with a high-level panel at the sixty-first session of the Commission for Social Development. The ECE region was represented on the panel by the Chair of the Standing Working Group on Ageing. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the Madrid International

Plan of Action on Ageing, the Standing Working Group on Ageing also organized an in-person side event on ‘MIPAA at 20: fit for the Future?’ on 8 February 2023, co-sponsored by Germany, Italy and Türkiye as well as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), and contributed to a second side event on ‘Leaving no one behind at the regional level: adopting an age-sensitive lens to policymaking’, co-organized by all regional commissions on 13 February 2023. The ECE Secretariat shared findings from the Fourth cycle review and appraisal at a third side event on ‘Prioritizing the rights of older persons for decent work, productive employment, and full participation in society’ that took place on 9 February 2023.

26. At its fifteenth meeting in November 2022, the SWGA decided to set up a task force on the follow-up on para. 47 of the Rome Ministerial Declaration, which entrusted the SWGA with the task of “updating RIS and exploring the possibility of also updating MIPAA to adapt ageing-related policy responses to economic, social, and digital transitions and emerging challenges, and developing further instruments to support them”. The task force will be established during the first quarter of 2023 and will be composed of member State representatives and representatives of civil society and the scientific research community. Its first task will be to develop a proposed roadmap for the update of the Regional Implementation Strategy on which it will report to the Standing Working Group on Ageing at its annual meeting in November 2023.

27. The Bureau of the Standing Working Group on Ageing will develop, with the assistance of the ECE secretariat, a new multi-year programme of work for 2023–2027 for the fifth cycle implementation of MIPAA/RIS. It will respond to the priorities laid out in the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration. The SWGA will be consulted on the proposed programme of work, which will be tabled for adoption at the sixteenth meeting of the SWGA on 20–22 November 2023. SWGA members will be invited to pledge financial support for the new programme of work for 2023–2027.

## **B. International cooperation, exchange of experience and fostering evidence-based policymaking**

### **1. In-depth policy discussion**

28. From 2023, the annual policy seminar on ageing will be integrated as an in-depth policy discussion on the third day of the annual meeting of the Standing Working Group on Ageing. The topic for the in-depth discussion in 2023 will be “combating inequalities in older age”.

### **2. Policy briefs on ageing**

29. Policy briefs have been an important element of the SWGA Programme of Work as they provide evidence-based policy advice on specific aspects of MIPAA/RIS and showcase good practices from across the region. Policy Brief No. 28 on “Older persons in vulnerable situations” will be issued in the first quarter of 2023.

## **C. Capacity building – operationalizing the Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing**

30. In 2023, the SWGA will further promote the development of national strategic frameworks for mainstreaming ageing as recommended by the ECE Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing. Further translations into national languages will be encouraged. So far, the Guidelines have been translated into Georgian, German, Portuguese, and Romanian and a translation into Turkish is in preparation.

31. Awareness-raising on mainstreaming ageing and the ECE Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing will be supported through the online course on mainstreaming ageing

targeted at policymakers, technical experts and other stakeholders, which will be finalized in 2023 based on feedback received on the first draft. The ECE secretariat will facilitate the translation of the course into national languages and disseminate it broadly.

32. In addition to the online course, the ECE secretariat supports face-to-face training events on mainstreaming ageing at the request of member States. A workshop on mainstreaming ageing for national policymakers in Georgia in February 2023 was requested by the Government of Georgia and co-organized in collaboration with UNFPA Georgia, building on the training methodology for age-sensitive analysis that was piloted in the Republic of Moldova in 2022. The tested methodology and workshop materials can be adapted for similar training workshops in other countries upon demand.

#### **D. Monitoring implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy and strengthening the evidence base for policymaking**

33. In November 2022, SWGA and EXCOM approved a new project for the development of a UNECE Ageing Policy Database to be developed and launched in 2023–2024 and updated annually until 2027. The database project aims to improve the capacity of policymakers for evidence-informed policymaking to respond to individual and population ageing. The database will provide easy access to comprehensive, systematic and comparative information on ageing-related policies in the ECE region that national policymakers can consult to inform policy formulation and development at the national level and monitor the implementation of MIPAA/RIS during the fifth implementation cycle.

#### **IV. Any proposed change to the subsidiary structure of the Standing Working Group on Ageing**

34. There are no proposed changes to the subsidiary structure of the ECE Standing Working Group on Ageing to report. During its fifteenth meeting on 21–22 November 2022, the SWGA adopted the draft programme of work of the Population Component of the subprogramme on Housing, Land Management and Population for 2023. EXCOM is invited to approve this decision.

#### **V. Follow-up to the 2021 session of the Economic Commission for Europe**

35. There were no decisions at the 2021 session of ECE for follow-up by the SWGA.

#### **VI. Intersectoral activities: new activities and/or progress in existing intersectoral activities**

36. The work of SWGA on population ageing contributes to numerous intersectoral activities of ECE and beyond. In 2023, the SWGA will co-organize with WHO a side event at the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development focusing on the contribution of age-friendly city programmes to achieving SDGs 11 and 17.

37. The Population Unit acts as the ECE focal point for matters related to the United Nations Commission for Population and Development and the Commission for Social Development and liaises respectively with the DESA Population Division and the Division for Inclusive Social Development. The Unit also actively contributes to the activities of the global Inter-Agency Group on Ageing, notably to the system-wide implementation of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030).

## VII. Technical cooperation activities

38. Enhancing the capacity of all member States, and particularly those in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, to mainstream ageing and align their policies with relevant international frameworks and initiatives such as MIPAA/RIS and the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030), and to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is at the core of the capacity-building activities coordinated by the Population Unit. They include:

- (a) Tailored road maps and evaluations on mainstreaming ageing at the request of member States;
- (b) Capacity development workshops;
- (c) Advisory services to address country-specific needs;
- (d) Development of methodological guidance, tools and training materials

39. In 2023, technical cooperation activities will continue to focus on capacity development for mainstreaming ageing through training workshops and advisory services at the request of member States.

## VIII. Cooperation with other organizations

40. The Standing Working Group on Ageing and its secretariat maintain good cooperation with the other organizations active in the area of population ageing in the ECE region. Close relationships have been maintained with the European Commission, WHO (HQ and the regional office for Europe), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the UNFPA Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECARO) in Istanbul, as well as research institutions and civil society, including the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, AGE Platform Europe and HelpAge International, among others.

41. An example of close cooperation with UNFPA EECARO are the periodic regional reviews of ICPD. In 2023, ECE and EECARO will jointly organize the regional ICPD+30 review with a high-level regional meeting on 19 and 20 October 2023 in Geneva.

42. The Population Unit is an active partner in the “Joint programme on Ageing: Building forward better in light of COVID-19” launched in July 2020 by UNFPA, WHO, ECE, OHCHR and HelpAge International. This regional initiative aims to strengthen coordinated support for and actions in member States through the United Nations country teams. Collaborative actions focus on: (1) enhancing preparedness and emergency response during the pandemic and beyond to mitigate the impact; (2) person-centred integrated social care during and beyond the pandemic to ensure ageing in dignity; and (3) contributing to changing the narrative about older people to promote their human rights and to enable participatory, conducive environments.

43. At the global level, the Population Unit is a member of the United Nations-wide Inter-Agency Group on Ageing, and actively participates in, and co-chairs the regular (online) meetings with its counterparts in other regional commissions.