



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

Geneva, 20–22 November 2023

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

**Implementation of the programme of work
of the Standing Working Group on Ageing in 2023
and plans for 2024****Implementation of the programme of work of the Standing
Working Group on Ageing in 2023****Note by the secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Working Group on Ageing (WGA) was established in 2008 as an intergovernmental mechanism to facilitate the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS). On 24 July 2020, following resolution 2020/19 of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), revised terms of reference of WGA updating its mandate and changing its name to Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGA) came into force.

2. The programme of work of the population component of the housing, land management and population subprogramme for 2023, as contained in document ECE/WG.1/2022/5, was approved by the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) at its 127th meeting on 16 March 2023. This document provides a report on the activities undertaken at the time of writing and planned for the final quarter of 2023 to implement the SWGA programme of work.

**II. Implementation of the main elements of the programme of
work of the Standing Working Group on Ageing for 2023****A. Fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action
on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy**

3. The fourth review and appraisal of MIPAA was concluded with a high-level panel discussion on 8 February 2023 at the sixty-first session of the Commission for Social Development in New York. The UNECE region was represented by the Chair of SWGA (Italy).



4. The panel discussion was followed by an in-person side event on “MIPAA at 20: fit for future?” organized by the Bureau of SWGA in collaboration with the secretariat at the request of SWGA and co-sponsored by Germany, Italy, and Türkiye. It was webcast on UN Web TV. Participants noted the open and engaged discussion.

5. The Vice-Chair of SWGA (Germany) also contributed the region’s perspective to an additional side event organized by all United Nations regional commissions on “Leaving No One Behind at the Regional Level: Adopting an Age-Sensitive Lens to Policymaking” which was held online on 13 February 2023.

6. A resolution on the fourth review and appraisal of MIPAA (E/CN.5/2023/L.6) was recommended by the Commission for Social Development to ECOSOC for adoption. The resolution was adopted by ECOSOC in June 2023 (E/RES/2023/15).

B. Raising awareness on ageing and its implications for sustainable development and creating synergies with related policy agendas

7. In 2023, several opportunities for raising awareness on ageing and its implications for sustainable development were seized by creating synergies with related policy agendas, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), and by fostering collaborations with other organizations working in the field of ageing.

8. Population ageing was featured prominently in the regional review of progress on the Programme of Action of ICPD that UNECE conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.¹ The UNECE Regional Conference on ICPD “Population and Development: Ensuring Rights and Choices” that will take place in Geneva on 19 and 20 October 2023 will assess progress, highlight good practices and identified gaps in implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. It further aims to strengthen linkages for acceleration of ICPD and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and identify priorities for the way forward.

9. Synergies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were also highlighted at a side event of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, held online on 28 March 2023. The event “Towards age-friendly sustainable cities and communities”² was co-organized with the World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities to demonstrate how investments towards age-friendly environments contribute to the 2030 Agenda’s ambition to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable (Sustainable Development Goal 11) as well as other Sustainable Development Goals and targets. Representatives of the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities from Ireland, Poland, and Spain as well as leaders in healthy ageing from Tajikistan shared concrete actions being taken in their countries and communities to foster the abilities of older persons and create better environments in which to grow old. Sixty-six participants from 30 countries attended the side event.

10. In 2023, the secretariat has continued to coordinate activities and collaborate closely with other United Nations entities, including through the Inter-Agency Group on Ageing, to promote the system-wide implementation of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing, 2021–2030. The secretariat has further continued to coordinate ageing-related activities in Eastern Europe and Central Asia through the Joint Programme on Ageing, a regional initiative developed in collaboration with the UNFPA Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, WHO, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and HelpAge International.

11. The secretariat further facilitated the “Regional expert consultation on older persons in the context of climate change-induced disasters and building back better in Europe and North America” convened by the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights

¹ Further details on the ICPD Regional Report and Conference are available online at <https://unece.org/population/icpd30>.

² See <https://unece.org/info/Population/events/376317>.

by older persons (co-facilitated with OHCHR) in May 2023, a technical meeting of the Titchfield Group on ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data hosted by the secretariat in Geneva in September 2023, and a launch event for the Progress Report on the Decade of Healthy Ageing Implementation organized back to back with the sixteenth meeting of SWGA with WHO.

12. The secretariat also continued to foster collaborations with civil society and the scientific research community. The secretariat contributed to the organization of various events organized by partners, including an event co-organized with the NGO Committee on Ageing to commemorate the International Day of Older Persons, building on the successful online event that was jointly organized in September 2022. The 2023 event will be on the theme “Climate change-induced disasters: Older persons’ preparedness and response to build forward better” and is planned to take place in Geneva and online, on 28 September 2023. Another example is cooperation on a series of online seminars engaging civil society organizations organized by the German National Association of Senior Citizens’ Organisations (BAGSO) with a first event planned in November 2023.

13. The Chair of SWGA met with chairs of the UNECE sectoral committees on the occasion of the seventieth session of the Economic Commission for Europe on 19 April 2023. The meeting focused on the theme of digital and green transformations in support of sustainable development, which was the theme of the Commission session, and provided a valuable opportunity to raise awareness about the activities of SWGA.

14. To support the dissemination of the outputs of SWGA and raise awareness on ageing, the secretariat has issued several news articles and social media postings throughout the year in addition to informing about meetings and activities via the UNECE website and email dissemination lists.

C. International cooperation, exchange of experience and policy discussion

1. Policy briefs on ageing

15. The UNECE policy briefs on ageing focus on policy challenges and priorities under MIPAA/RIS and highlight diverse policy strategies developed and implemented across the UNECE region. All policy briefs are available on the UNECE website including translations into national languages provided by the members of SWGA.³

16. Policy Brief No. 28 “Older persons in vulnerable situations” was issued in June 2023. As agreed by the Bureau in April 2023, and in response to comments previously received by SWGA, Policy Brief No. 28 was issued with a new design and accompanied by a short summary version entitled “Key Messages”. The launch of the policy brief was accompanied by an online event on same topic. The event presented key messages of the policy brief, and featured good practices from member States and civil society as well as perspectives from research. A report of the event is available online.⁴

17. The topic for Policy Brief No. 29 to be issued in 2024 will be decided at the sixteenth meeting of SWGA.

2. In-depth policy discussion during annual meeting

18. An in-depth policy discussion on ageing will be held on 22 November 2023 on the topic “combating inequalities in older age” as part of the sixteenth meeting of SWGA. The in-depth policy discussion during the annual meeting of SWGA replaces the previous UNECE Policy Seminar on Ageing series from 2023. The topic was agreed by SWGA at its fifteenth meeting in November 2022.

19. The topic for the 2024 policy discussion will be agreed at the sixteenth meeting of SWGA.

³ See <https://unece.org/policy-briefs>.

⁴ See <https://unece.org/info/Population/events/379728>.

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

1. Capacity development on mainstreaming ageing

20. On 23 and 24 February 2023, a training workshop on mainstreaming ageing into public policy through age-sensitive analysis was organized for 24 government officials at the request of the Government of Georgia and in collaboration with the UNFPA country office in Georgia. The workshop followed the methodology piloted during a series of training workshops for national and local policymakers held in the Republic of Moldova in 2022–2023.

21. Based on the insights gained from these workshops as well as an expert workshop on mainstreaming ageing organized by BAGSO in December 2022, the secretariat has developed a training package for workshops on mainstreaming ageing. All resources are available online.⁵

22. The online course on mainstreaming ageing was finalized in 2023, following testing and feedback by several SWGA members and stakeholders. It can be accessed online.⁶ The online course introduces course takers to the steps involved in developing a strategic approach to mainstreaming ageing across policy fields and levels. It is based on the UNECE Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing issued in 2021. SWGA members are invited to use the online course to raise awareness on mainstreaming ageing and to translate it into different languages.

23. On 5 September 2023 the secretariat organized a dedicated online event to inform SWGA members and stakeholders about these mainstreaming ageing tools and to encourage their use across UNECE member States.

2. Road maps for mainstreaming ageing

24. Road maps for mainstreaming ageing, developed at the request of member States, provide tailored policy recommendations for the implementation of MIPAA/RIS through mainstreaming ageing across broader national policies.

25. In 2023, the secretariat received a request for technical assistance with the development of a National Strategy and Action Plan for Healthy and Active Longevity in Uzbekistan. In collaboration with WHO and UNFPA, the secretariat will develop a situation analysis and policy recommendations based on the road maps for mainstreaming ageing methodology. The project will start in the last quarter of 2023 and continue in 2024.

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

1. Ageing Policies Database

26. The development of the UNECE Ageing Policies Database, agreed at the fifteenth meeting of SWGA, was initiated in 2023. The secretariat developed a list of policy themes and instruments for inclusion in the database that were discussed with the Bureau in April 2023. Based on this taxonomy country reports submitted for the fourth MIPAA/RIS review and appraisal cycle are being coded to identify policies for inclusion in the database. Progress will be reported to SWGA at its sixteenth meeting.

2. Generations and Gender Programme

27. In 2023, 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. The annual meeting of the

⁵ See <https://unece.org/population/ageing/mainstreaming-ageing>.

⁶ See <https://unece.org/population/ageing/mainstreaming-ageing>.

Council of Partners took place online on 27 June 2023.⁷ As the co-ordinator of the GGP Council of Partners, the UNECE secretariat performs a bridging function between those responsible for programme management and development and those in charge of its implementation at the national level. UNECE also processes applications by scientists and experts who wish to use GGP microdata for their research.⁸

F. Updating the Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

28. Paragraph 47 of the Rome Ministerial Declaration entrusted SWGA with the task of updating MIPAA/RIS and exploring the possibility of also updating MIPAA to adapt ageing-related policy responses to economic, social, and digital transitions and emerging challenges. In November 2022, SWGA decided to establish a task force to follow up on Paragraph 47 to develop the modalities and timeline for this task and to lead on the preparation of the revised Regional Implementation Strategy for MIPAA.

29. At its fifteenth meeting in April 2023, the Bureau nominated the Vice-Chair of SWGA (Germany), to chair the task force. The Bureau agreed that civil society and the academic and research community will be represented on the task force by the civil society and the academic and research community representatives in the Bureau. In June, members of SWGA were invited by the secretariat to express their interest to join the task force. A first meeting establishing the task force was convened in September 2023.

30. In a first step, the task force is developing the modalities for a participatory approach involving civil society and the academic and research community, which will be implemented in a second step. The proposed modalities will be presented to SWGA for discussion and approval at its sixteenth meeting.

G. Development of new Programme of Work of the Standing Working Group on Ageing 2023–2027

31. SWGA at its fifteenth meeting decided to form an extended Bureau to develop the multi-year programme of work for the years 2023–2027. Representatives from Belgium, Canada, Italy and Norway joined the extended Bureau for this task. Between March and April 2023 the Bureau worked with the secretariat on the key elements of the programme of work and organized two ad hoc online meetings in March to discuss the proposed elements of work and topical priorities for the fifth implementation cycle of MIPAA/RIS. The Bureau finalized the draft Programme of Work of SWGA 2023–2027 during the fifteenth meeting of the Bureau on 27 and 28 April 2023 and agreed for the draft to be shared with members of SWGA for comments ahead of the sixteenth meeting at which the new Programme of Work will be tabled for adoption.⁹

H. Ageing Fund

32. Activities under the Programme of Work of SWGA are co-financed through voluntary contributions by member States to the Ageing Fund.

33. The multi-year Programme of Work 2018–2022 was implemented through the project entitled “Improve capacities of UNECE member States in developing evidence-based policy measures to meet their commitments under MIPAA/RIS and 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration: Ageing (Phase III)”, extended throughout 2023 to cover the development of the new multi-year programme of work to be adopted in 2023.

34. Activities under this project were evaluated through an end-of-project evaluation in the second quarter of 2023. The evaluation concluded that the project’s main outputs are

⁷ See <https://unece.org/info/Population/events/380731>.

⁸ Data can be accessed by registered users at www.ggp-i.org.

⁹ ECE/WG.1/2023/3.

relevant, effective, and efficient, ensuring sustainability of the efforts to address ageing issues in the region. Furthermore, a survey among national focal points on ageing and other stakeholders confirmed that they consider the work undertaken in the framework of this project valuable. The evaluation also resulted in several recommendations for action that will inform and strengthen future activities.

35. Based on the new Programme of Work of SWGA 2023–2027, Phase IV for the Ageing project will be proposed to finance the implementation of activities in the coming years. Members of SWGA are invited to pledge financial contributions to the Ageing Fund and offer in-kind contributions in support of the implementation of the Programme of Work of SWGA 2023–2027.

III. Conclusions

36. In 2023, SWGA has worked towards the commitments of the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration, which set the policy priorities for the fifth cycle of implementation of MIPAA/RIS in the UNECE region. An important task for SWGA during the fifth cycle of implementation of MIPAA/RIS will be to update RIS and to adapt ageing-related policy responses to economic, social, and digital transitions and emerging challenges for older persons and societies in the UNECE region.

37. SWGA has further strengthened international cooperation and awareness-raising in the field of ageing and has strengthened its offer for capacity development on mainstreaming ageing.

38. The new multi-year Programme of Work of SWGA 2023–2027 proposes continuity of several activities that have proven to be of value, such as advancing mainstreaming ageing, and sharing of good practices through policy briefs and discussions. It also includes several new activities such as the development of the Ageing Policies Database that will strengthen monitoring of MIPAA/RIS and enhance access to information on ageing-related policies across the region. The implementation of planned activities under this programme of work will depend on the ability of SWGA to raise sufficient resources through voluntary contributions to the Ageing Fund.
