

Annex II

Programme of Work of the Standing Working Group on Ageing 2023–2027

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Rome in 2022 reaffirmed the mandate of the Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGA) and pledged support for its activities. The Programme of Work for 2023–2027 foresees new and continuing elements of the SWGA activities in response to the goals and objectives of the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration and in alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The realization of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS) contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 16, and 17 where the connections between the priority policy goals agreed in the Rome Ministerial Declaration and SDGs are the strongest.

2. The new Programme of Work builds on the core activities which proved helpful in implementing MIPAA/RIS in the previous cycles: policy briefs, road maps for mainstreaming ageing, policy seminars, capacity-building workshops and monitoring of MIPAA/RIS implementation. These activities may be continued and adjusted where needed. They will be supplemented by new programme elements such as the development of the UNECE Ageing Policies Database agreed by SWGA at its fifteenth meeting in 2022.

3. To provide opportunities for exchange of experience, networking, and cross-sectoral collaboration to advance policies on ageing, including in relation to connecting ageing with SDGs, the annual SWGA meetings will continue dedicating time for country presentations and discussion in groups, and in-depth policy discussions. In addition, the secretariat will ensure regular communication and exchange on activities at the international level and inter-agency coordination of ageing-related activities through established mechanisms including the United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Ageing.

II. Proposed elements for the Programme of Work

4. The Programme of Work for 2023–2027 proposes activities in six main areas: (a) raising awareness on ageing and its implications for sustainable development in the UNECE region and creating synergies with related policy agendas; (b) advancing international cooperation and exchange of experience and knowledge; (c) providing guidelines and policy recommendations, advisory services and capacity-building; (d) monitoring the implementation of MIPAA/RIS and strengthening the evidence base for policymaking; (e) preparing for the fifth cycle of review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS implementation; (f) updating the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy for MIPAA.

5. The suggested activities are in line with the programme of work of the Population component of the Housing, Land Management and Population subprogramme for 2023 (ECE/WG.1/2022/5) approved by the Executive Committee of UNECE, and the Outline of key components of the programme of work of the Population Component of the Housing, Land Management and Population subprogramme for 2024 (ECE/WG.1/2022/INF).

A. Raising awareness on ageing and its implications for sustainable development in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region and creating synergies with related policy agendas

6. SWGA, with the support of the secretariat, will continue to raise awareness of individual and population ageing and their implications for sustainable development,

including through analysis and knowledge dissemination, and advance the implementation of MIPAA/RIS and the goals and objectives of the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration.

7. SWGA, its Bureau and the secretariat will seek to create synergies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing, and other international and regional agendas, including responding to population dynamics within a human rights framework, and advancing women's empowerment and gender equality. This can be advanced by fostering closer collaboration with different stakeholders, including United Nations agencies, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Social Security Association (ISSA), regional organizations (such as the European Commission), academia, and civil society, in implementing the activities outlined in this Programme of Work.

8. SWGA, with the support of the secretariat, will contribute to panels or organize side events at key national, regional, and international events to raise awareness of the importance of adapting to population ageing and for meeting the needs and respecting the human rights of older persons, for instance, at the annual Regional Forum for Sustainable Development and annual meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, periodic regional conferences on International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)(2023), the Beijing Platform for Action (2024), the Summit of the Future (2024), and the World Social Summit (2025).

B. International cooperation and exchange of experience and knowledge

(i) Policy briefs with good practice examples

9. Policy briefs remain an important element of the Programme of Work, as they provide access to evidence-based policy advice on specific aspects of MIPAA/RIS and showcase good practices from across the region. At least one policy brief per year will be prepared by the UNECE secretariat in collaboration with SWGA on a theme to be decided by the Standing Working Group. UNECE member States are invited to translate the policy briefs into national languages to share ideas and make them accessible to a wider circle of stakeholders. To enhance outreach, the publication of each policy brief will be accompanied by an executive summary with key messages and an online launch event.

(ii) In-depth policy discussions during annual meetings

10. Policy-specific discussions or “master-classes” that focus on policy challenges and responses developed by member States will be organized during the annual meetings of SWGA to facilitate policy dialogue and peer learning. Topics for in-depth discussions will be decided by SWGA.

(iii) Online policy discussions in between annual meetings

11. SWGA, with the support of the secretariat, will organize online discussions in between its annual sessions to promote policy dialogue and good practice exchange among a broad group of stakeholders on specific objectives of the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration and the Joint Declaration of Civil Society and Scientific Research.

(iv) Peer learning

12. To enhance peer learning, the secretariat could facilitate the organization of country visits between interested member States. Such country visits could give members of SWGA the opportunity to learn about a specific project or approach implemented by one member State and to exchange experiences on how to successfully address a specific policy challenge. The organization of such country visits would be at the discretion of inviting member States and could be organized either in person or virtually.

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

(i) Capacity development on mainstreaming ageing

13. Based on the UNECE Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing that were published in 2021, SWGA in cooperation with the experts from international organizations, United Nations agencies, academia and civil society organizations, will continue to develop concrete tools to facilitate the operationalization of the Guidelines. Such tools may include online courses, new methodologies, webinars and training workshops.

(ii) Road Maps for Mainstreaming Ageing and reviews of national policies on ageing

14. Road Maps are developed at the request of a member State and in accordance with the general terms of reference for the project approved by SWGA at its sixth meeting in 2013. For the period 2023–2027 road map recommendations will align with the Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing. To initiate development of the Road Map project, any interested member States are invited to submit their written requests to the secretariat.

15. Field missions and other activities related to the evaluation and monitoring of Road Map implementation may be undertaken at the request of member States.

(iii) National and subregional workshops

16. In the UNECE region there are considerable differences among countries in relation to the stage of population ageing and the implementation of MIPAA/RIS. In the work programme, priority will be given to national and subregional workshops that focus on specific challenges in the implementation of the goals of the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration. SWGA members are expected to contribute to such workshops alongside international organizations and the secretariat.

(iv) Development of new policy guidelines

17. SWGA may consider the possibility of developing new comprehensive policy guidelines on a specific emerging challenge (for example: age-sensitive and age-responsive emergency and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery, building on lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic).

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

18. Monitoring MIPAA/RIS implementation and strengthening the evidence base for age- and gender-sensitive policymaking continue to be core elements of the SWGA Programme of Work for 2023–2027. They aim to (1) provide evidence for the ongoing review of policies towards raising the quality of life of older women and men, and (2) engage key stakeholders in formulating and implementing policies and programmes that can improve the experiences of ageing for all and maintain the interconnected financial and social sustainability of public welfare systems in the UNECE region.

(i) Strengthening the evidence base through ageing-related and age-disaggregated data

19. SWGA, supported by the UNECE secretariat, will develop an indicator framework to facilitate the quantitative monitoring of progress in implementing MIPAA/RIS and the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration at regional and national levels, expanding on the Active Ageing Index (AAI) indicators used in previous MIPAA/RIS review and appraisal cycles. This exercise will allow to cover all areas of the Rome Ministerial Declaration, including long-term care and mainstreaming ageing. A mapping of ongoing efforts in this area, including those led by the Titchfield Group, the World Health Organization and the European Commission will be undertaken to take full account of existing developments. SWGA will continue to promote AAI as an established tool for measuring the untapped potential of older

people for active and healthy ageing across countries and explore the possibility of updating and revising AAI.

20. The Generations and Gender Programme (GGP) remains an essential component of data collection and research for the UNECE work on population issues. SWGA will continue promoting GGP as an important source of evidence on gender and intergenerational relations informing policymaking and monitoring.

(ii) United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Ageing Policies Database

21. SWGA with the support of the secretariat will develop the UNECE Ageing Policies Database to support policy formulation and monitoring by providing easy access to a searchable repository of ageing-related policies in UNECE countries. This will provide a qualitative and ongoing monitoring tool that will support the fifth cycle review and appraisal in 2026 and 2027. Members of SWGA will be annually requested to inform the secretariat of new policies and laws adopted to keep the database up to date.

E. Preparing for the fifth cycle of review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy implementation

22. For timely and successful completion of the fifth review and appraisal cycle of MIPAA/RIS in 2027, the preparatory work may start at the seventeenth meeting of SWGA in 2024 including an agreement on the timeline for preparation and submission of the country reports and their synthesis and on an outline of the guidelines for the country reports.

23. As in previous cycles, SWGA and its Bureau will act as the preparatory committee for the Conference. The sixth Ministerial Conference on Ageing will be held in 2027 to conclude the fifth cycle review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS implementation.

24. The preparatory work for the sixth UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing will start with the decision of the Commission for Social Development about the fifth review and appraisal exercise expected at its sixty-third session in 2025. UNECE member States will be invited to consider hosting the 2027 Ministerial Conference on Ageing. The potential host country will be invited to prepare a concept note for the sixth Ministerial Conference for discussion at the eighteenth meeting of SWGA in 2025.

F. Updating the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

25. The 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration, in paragraph 47, entrusted SWGA with the task of updating RIS and exploring the possibility of also updating MIPAA to adapt ageing-related policy responses to the economic, social, digital transitions and emerging challenges.

26. At its fifteenth meeting in 2022, SWGA decided to establish a task force for the follow-up on paragraph 47 of the Rome Ministerial Declaration, composed of member States and academic and research community and civil society representatives, to develop the modalities for updating RIS and guide the development of an updated regional implementation strategy by 2027. The task force will report annually to SWGA.

III. Financing the Programme of Work

27. The Working Group's initial terms of reference (ECE/EX/2008/L.11) and their later amendments stipulated that its annual meetings are to be serviced by the UNECE secretariat without the need for additional resources (for the latest terms of reference see ECE/EX/2019/L.1. Annex).

28. The Population Unit in the Statistical Division of UNECE is responsible for the work related to ageing, including servicing the meetings of SWGA and its Bureau. The regular

budget provides for two professional and one general service posts in the unit. The small size of the secretariat limits the range of activities it can support. A fund for voluntary contributions by member States to support activities related to capacity development for ageing-related policymaking, better informed ageing-related policies in the region and more effective implementation and monitoring of MIPAA/RIS, the Ageing Fund, was therefore established.

29. Delivering the activities and outputs envisaged for the fifth implementation cycle of MIPAA/RIS and financing travel for experts and meeting participants from low- and lower-medium income countries will require extrabudgetary resources.

30. In response to the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration, members of SWGA are invited to pledge financial resources and offer in-kind contributions in support of the implementation of the Programme of Work for 2023–2027.
