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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

**Programme of work of the Standing Working Group on Ageing:  
implementation in 2024 and plans for 2025****Implementation of the programme of work of the Standing  
Working Group on Ageing in 2024****Note by the Secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGGA) is an intergovernmental mechanism to facilitate the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS). It meets annually to review the achievements and developments of the past year and set the programme of work for the year to come. It is serviced by the UNECE Population Unit, which acts as its Secretariat.

2. At its sixteenth meeting in November 2023, SWGGA adopted its multi-year programme of work for 2023–2027 as contained in document ECE/WG.1/2023/2 (Annex II) and programme of work of the population component of the Housing, land management and population subprogramme for 2024, as contained in document ECE/WG.1/2023/5, which was subsequently approved by the UNECE Executive Committee at its 133rd meeting on 25 March 2024.

3. This document provides a report on the activities implemented at the time of writing and planned for the final quarter of 2024.

**II. Implementation of the programme of work of the Standing  
Working Group on Ageing in 2024****A. Raising awareness on ageing and its implications for sustainable  
development and creating synergies with related policy agendas**

4. In 2024, SWGGA and its Secretariat raised awareness on ageing and its implications for sustainable development by highlighting synergies with related policy agendas and frameworks and fostering collaboration with other organizations working in the field of ageing.

5. Synergies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were highlighted at the sixty-second session of the Commission for Social Development which took place on 5–14 February 2024 and focused on social policies to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. During an interactive dialogue with senior officials of the United Nations system on how to improve mainstreaming of social considerations in development frameworks, the UNECE Executive Secretary delivered a statement on mainstreaming ageing highlighting the work of SWGA and calling for cross-sectoral, integrated approaches to demographic change and social development.

6. The implications of population ageing for development agendas including the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were highlighted at the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development that took place from 29 April to 3 May 2024. Key findings and recommendations of the UNECE Regional Conference on Population and Development (19 and 20 October 2023) were presented by the co-Chair of the regional conference during a high-level interactive panel discussion, and the main findings of the report on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in the UNECE region were shared during the regional commissions side event “ICPD Programme of Action at 30: Perspectives from the world’s regions”. The presentations highlighted the ongoing need to guarantee the rights of older persons and to adapt to population ageing to achieve the vision and goals of the ICPD Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda.

7. The Secretariat has continued to collaborate with partners across the United Nations system, civil society and the research community to raise awareness on ageing. Ongoing collaborations include the Joint Programme on Ageing, a regional initiative developed with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, World Health Organization (WHO), HelpAge International and the NGO Committee on Ageing in Geneva. The Secretariat also regularly exchanges and collaborates on ageing with the other regional commissions and the United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Ageing to advance the system-wide implementation of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030) and raise awareness on ageing and its implications for sustainable development and creating synergies between MIPAA and related policy agendas. Activities in 2024 have included a joint regional commissions paper on “International relations: creating a world for all ages so that no one is left behind” and a joint side event entitled “Towards a society for all ages: building solidarity and equity across generations” during the Summit of the Future Action Days in September 2024. Regional commissions are also working on a joint paper on social development challenges as a contribution to the preparatory process for the Second World Summit for Social Development that will take place in 2025. The Secretariat further contributed to several webinars, international conferences, expert meetings and training events organized by partners to raise awareness about ageing and the activities of SWGA.

8. To support the dissemination of the outputs of the Standing Working Group on Ageing and raise awareness of 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. Further communication activities included the development of a logo for SWGA and updates to the website to enhance communication about the group’s activities.

## **B. International cooperation and exchange of experience and knowledge**

9. During the last year, SWGA and its Secretariat facilitated the exchange of insights and good practices between Governments, research, and civil society networks.

### **1. Policy briefs on ageing**

10. The 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 online including translations into national languages provided by the members of SWGA.<sup>1</sup>

11. Policy Brief on Ageing No. 29 entitled “Mental Health of Older Persons”, together with a “Key Messages” summary, were issued in June 2024. The policy brief was launched with an online policy dialogue on the 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 the WHO Regional Office for Europe. A summary of the event and presentations are available online.<sup>2</sup>

12. The topic for Policy Brief No. 30 to be issued in 2025 will be decided at the seventeenth meeting of SWGA.

## **2. Policy dialogues on ageing**

13. Three policy dialogues on ageing were held as online policy discussions in between annual meetings during 2024. The first addressed the topic of abuse of and violence against older persons and was held on 14 March 2024 as a side event to the 2024 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE region. The second policy dialogue on the mental health of older persons was held on 18 June 2024. Around 60 individuals from government, civil society, the scientific community, and international organizations participated in each of the events. The third policy dialogue on coordination of ageing policies across the government will take place on 17 September 2024.

14. The topics for the policy dialogues on ageing in 2025 will be decided by SWGA at its seventeenth meeting.

## **3. In-depth policy discussion during annual meeting**

15. An in-depth policy discussion on the use and generation of evidence for ageing-related policymaking will be held on 22 November 2024 as part of the seventeenth meeting of SWGA. The discussion will highlight the importance of evidence-based ageing policies, identify gaps and challenges in this area, share best practices in the use of evidence in national ageing policies, and provide the opportunity to voice evidence needs.

16. The topic for the 2025 in-depth policy discussion will be agreed at the seventeenth meeting of SWGA.

## **4. Peer learning**

17. To facilitate peer learning visits between member States, the Secretariat has invited expressions of interest through an online survey. Member States will also have the opportunity to express interest in hosting and participating in peer learning during the seventeenth meeting of SWGA.

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

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

18. To support the operationalization and dissemination of the UNECE Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing issued in 2021, a short, interactive online training course was launched in 2023.<sup>3</sup> 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. SWGA continues to promote the guidelines and online course, including through translation into national languages. The

<sup>1</sup> All policy briefs on ageing can be accessed at <https://unece.org/policy-briefs>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://unece.org/info/Population/events/391700>.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://unece.org/population/ageing/mainstreaming-ageing>.

course has so far been translated into German. Translations of the guidelines into Italian and of the online course into Russian and Turkish are in progress.

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

19. 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.

20. In 2023, the Secretariat received a request for technical assistance towards the development of a National Strategy and Action Plan for Healthy and Active Longevity in Uzbekistan. In collaboration with UNFPA and WHO, the Secretariat is developing a situation analysis and policy recommendations based on the road maps for mainstreaming ageing methodology.

21. As part of the project, the Secretariat participated in a week-long joint mission to Uzbekistan in November 2023 during which meetings with representatives of various government ministries and agencies, civil society as well as other international organizations were held. UNECE also contributed to the conference “Sustainable development and demographic changes: national and international practices” organized by the Senate of Uzbekistan and UNFPA in Tashkent on 28 and 29 November 2023, drawing attention to the benefits of early adaptation to population ageing, even in relatively youthful societies.

## **3. Data availability and needs assessment in Georgia**

22. To strengthen the implementation and monitoring of national and international policy frameworks, the Government of Georgia requested support from UNECE in assessing the availability of statistical data on demographic change, population ageing, and the situation of older persons. The Secretariat, with the support of UNFPA and a national consultant, has been working on a data availability and needs assessment on ageing-related data in Georgia. The assessment involves the review of available statistical data across relevant policy domains, the identification of data needs and gaps, the preparation of a statistical portrait based on available data, and recommendations to improve the quality of existing data and to develop new statistics on population ageing and older persons.

## **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**

### **1. Ageing Policies Database**

23. The development of the UNECE Ageing Policies Database, agreed at the fifteenth meeting of SWGA, was initiated in 2023. As part of the content development, in a first step, the Secretariat coded policies included in the country reports submitted for the fourth MIPAA/RIS review and appraisal cycle according to policy themes and instruments. Countries reviewed and amended the coded list of policies in the first quarter of 2024. A request to submit policy updates, covering the period since the last MIPAA/RIS appraisal cycle, was shared with all countries in June 2024. The technical development of the database is ongoing, and progress will be reported to SWGA at its seventeenth meeting.

### **2. Generations and Gender Programme**

24. In 2024, the Secretariat has continued to act as a clearing house 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 Council of Partners took place online on 6 June 2024.<sup>4</sup> GGP is a leading source for policy-relevant research on demographic trends in the region. A new round of the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS-II) was launched in 2020. Fifteen UNECE countries have completed at least the first wave of GGS-II data collection (Austria, Belarus, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark,

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/391454>.

Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Kazakhstan, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Norway, Republic of Moldova, Sweden, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and five more are planning to conduct surveys at the end of 2024 or in 2025 (Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, and Poland).

### 3. Conference of European Statisticians in-depth review on ageing-related statistics

25. At its seventy-second plenary session on 20 and 21 June 2024, the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) selected ageing-related statistics as a topic for in-depth review in 2024–2025. With Secretariat support from the UNECE Population Unit and Statistical Division, the in-depth review will assess progress towards the implementation of the *Recommendations on Ageing-related Statistics* published by UNECE in 2016 and identify ongoing challenges related to the production of statistics on population ageing and older persons.

26. The results of the review will inform the development of a quantitative monitoring framework for the implementation of MIPAA/RIS. The recently established SWGA task force on quantitative monitoring of MIPAA/RIS (see following paragraphs) will contribute to the in-depth review, providing a data user perspective and strengthening collaboration between policymakers and statistical offices to improve the use of official statistics to inform policymaking in the field of ageing and societal adaptation to demographic change. The results of the in-depth review on ageing-related statistics will be presented to the CES Bureau at their February 2025 meeting.

### 4. Task force on quantitative monitoring of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy

27. At its sixteenth meeting in November 2023 SWGA invited the Secretariat to explore the creation of a working group to develop a quantitative monitoring framework for MIPAA/RIS. The establishment of a task force and tentative milestones for its work were further discussed by the SWGA Bureau at its sixteenth meeting in April 2024. The Bureau nominated Portugal to chair the task force and following a call for expression of interest, the task force was established in July 2024.

28. The task force will work for a period of two and a half years (2024–2026) towards the objective of developing a framework of quantitative indicators to monitor the implementation of MIPAA/RIS at the national and regional levels, to be submitted alongside the revised draft RIS to SWGA at its nineteenth annual meeting in November 2026. The framework will be piloted during the fifth periodic review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS in 2026–2027 and used in future review and appraisal cycles. As part of this process, the task force will contribute to the in-depth review on ageing-related statistics being carried out by the Conference of European Statisticians during the second half of 2024.

29. SWGA will be invited to endorse the terms of reference for the task force at its seventeenth meeting.

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

30. 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”. A task force to carry out this work was established in September 2023 and is composed of member State representatives and representatives of civil society and the academic and research community. Terms of reference for the task force (ECE/WG.1/2023/INF.3) and proposed modalities of work (ECE/WG.1/2023/INF.4) were presented to and approved by SWGA in November 2023. The task force will revise RIS between 2023 and 2026, submitting the revised draft to SWGA at its nineteenth annual meeting in November 2026.

31. Central to the effort to update RIS is a participatory approach that will engage diverse stakeholders to capture the voices and insights of those affected by ageing. During its first year of work, the task force developed guidance for stakeholder engagement exercises to be carried out at the national level.<sup>5</sup> The guidance provides general principles, good practice examples, and guiding questions to support national processes. It also includes practical information on timelines and sharing results with the task force. The guidance was presented to National Focal Points on Ageing in an online briefing on 4 June 2024. Plans and early results from national stakeholder engagement exercises will be presented to SWGA at its seventeenth meeting along with an update on the taskforce's activities during the second half of 2024.

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

32. SWGA has commenced preparations for the fifth review and appraisal of MIPAA and RIS, which will cover the period 2022–2027. The seventeenth meeting of SWGA will include a discussion on modalities for the next review and guidelines for national reporting of progress on the implementation of MIPAA/RIS. The UNECE Ageing Policies Database, the new quantitative monitoring framework for MIPAA/RIS, and the results of national stakeholder engagement exercises in the context of the update to RIS will be used to support the fifth review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS.

## **G. Ageing Fund**

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

34. The multi-year Programme of Work 2023–2027 is implemented through the project entitled “Strengthening capacities of UNECE member States to develop evidence-based policy measures to meet the commitments under MIPAA/RIS and the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing (Ageing – Phase IV)”. Since the sixteenth meeting of SWGA, financial contributions from Austria, Estonia, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and AARP in support of the implementation of the Programme of Work of SWGA amounted to 140,252.92 USD.

35. Members of SWGA are invited to pledge financial contributions to the Ageing Fund in support of the implementation of the Programme of Work of SWGA in 2025–2027.

## **III. Conclusions**

36. In 2024, 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. The new Ageing Policies Database and work towards developing a quantitative monitoring framework for MIPAA/RIS are important steps to strengthen monitoring at regional level and will support the upcoming fifth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy in the UNECE region.

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<sup>5</sup> See ECE/WG.1/2024/INF.3.