



Information Note for National Focal Points on Ageing

September 2024

Population ageing is one of the mega trends of our times. It is happening – at a varying pace – in all world regions, and the UNECE region is at the forefront of this global demographic transformation. While population ageing brings challenges, it also brings opportunities. The **UNECE Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGA)** fosters regional cooperation on ageing, supporting member States to adapt to demographic change and to create an environment in which individuals and societies can fully realize the potential of longevity.

The 2002 [Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing \(MIPAA\)](#) and the [UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy \(RIS\)](#) serve as the main guiding frameworks for the work of SWGA. MIPAA links ageing-related issues to social and economic development and human rights, focusing on three priority directions: older persons and development; advancing health and well-being into old age; and ensuring enabling and supportive environments. In 2022, UNECE member States recommitted to the goals of MIPAA/RIS in the Rome Ministerial Declaration, which set the policy agenda for MIPAA implementation in the region between 2022 and 2027.

The transformative changes required to adapt societies to individual longevity and population ageing cannot be achieved without a whole-of-government and whole-of-society effort. For this reason, MIPAA and the ageing-related policy documents that have followed it recommend **mainstreaming ageing** – the systematic integration of ageing issues across all relevant policy fields and at all levels of government.

SWGA guides policymaking towards the implementation of MIPAA/RIS and works to mainstream ageing issues across policy agendas. This information note describes the main activities of SWGA and the modalities of its work. It also highlights the opportunities available to member States for regional dialogue, cooperation, and capacity-building on ageing.

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is based in Geneva and is one of five regional commissions of the United Nations. UNECE's major aim is to promote economic integration and cooperation across its [56 member States](#) in Europe, North America and Asia.



As a multilateral platform, UNECE also promotes sustainable development and economic prosperity among its member countries through:

- policy dialogue,
- negotiation of international legal instruments,
- development of regulations and norms,
- exchange and application of best practices as well as economic and technical expertise,
- technical cooperation for countries with economies in transition.

UNECE facilitates the regional implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and outcomes of global United Nations Conferences and Summits such as the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) and the Second World Assembly on Ageing (2002).

UNECE's terms of reference have been defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), see: <https://unece.org/mission>.

Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGA)

The Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGA) is an intergovernmental body made up of National Focal Points on Ageing (NFPAs) representing the member States of the UNECE region. Representatives of civil society, the research community, and international organizations also participate in its activities, providing a platform for multistakeholder dialogue on ageing. SWGA is a subsidiary body to the Executive Committee of UNECE and the Chair of SWGA reports annually to the Executive Committee on its work programme and achievements.

Objective

SWGA collaborates to identify and share innovative solutions to adjust to demographic change and to create an environment in which individuals and societies can fully realize the potential of longevity. The group works on the premise that today's challenges related to population ageing cannot be addressed by one sector alone and develops guidance on mainstreaming population ageing in policy and regulatory frameworks.

SWGA:

- supports the realization of the policy principles set out in MIPAA/RIS and the subsequent [Ministerial Declarations on Ageing](#) among the UNECE member States;
- promotes international cooperation, exchange of experience and policy discussion on ageing and intergenerational relations, taking into account the situation and different needs of individual countries;
- develops guidelines and policy recommendations for Governments on population ageing issues;
- supports MIPAA/RIS monitoring activities and coordinates the five-year review and appraisal exercises of MIPAA/RIS implementation;
- provides demand-driven policy advisory services and other capacity-building activities;
- raises awareness of population ageing and its implications throughout the UNECE region;
- creates synergies with related policy agendas such as the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), the [ICPD Programme of Action and its follow up beyond 2014](#), and the [United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing \(2021–2030\)](#).

The terms of reference of SWGA can be found [here](#) on the UNECE website.

Programme of work

Every five years, members of the Standing Working Group on Ageing jointly develop a multiyear Programme of Work (PoW). PoW for the years 2023–2027 was approved at the 16th annual meeting in November 2023 and can be found [here](#) on the UNECE website.

National Focal Points on Ageing

The role of the National Focal Points on Ageing (NFPA) is to represent their Government on the Standing Working Group on Ageing and to represent the Standing Working Group on Ageing in their country. NFPA is designated by the Government, and, ideally, is an individual who actively works on the ageing portfolio in the Government.

How does SWGA work?

Annual meeting in Geneva



SWGA meets annually in November in Geneva, where it reviews the achievements and developments in implementing its PoW during the previous year and sets the agenda of work for the year to come. Detailed reports and presentations of each annual meeting can be found [here](#) on the UNECE website.

Invitations and the agenda for the annual meeting are sent by the Secretariat in September. A preparatory survey invites members of the group to indicate if they would like to share recent policy developments or activities during the annual meeting. The annual meeting which is held in person serves as a forum for the exchange of experience and best practices and provides a valuable opportunity for networking with colleagues working on similar issues across the region. Representatives of civil society, the research community and international organizations can attend the annual meetings as observers.

Activities throughout the year

Policy Dialogues on Ageing, Policy Briefs on Ageing, and UNECE Ageing Policies Database

SWGA members can engage throughout the year by participating in online policy dialogues and providing inputs to joint products such as policy briefs and the UNECE Ageing Policies Database.

In addition to an in-depth policy discussion on the third day of the annual meeting, SWGA organizes three online policy dialogues each year on topics decided during the annual meeting. SWGA members are invited to present relevant policy strategies and national practices. With support from the Secretariat, SWGA publishes annually a Policy Brief on Ageing focusing on a policy challenge under MIPAA/RIS and highlighting diverse policy strategies implemented across the UNECE region. The topic for each brief is decided at the SWGA annual meeting in November. SWGA members are asked to share relevant policy examples from their country and are encouraged to translate the brief into national languages.

SWGA and its Secretariat are currently developing an online Ageing Policies Database to provide easy access to examples of ageing policy across the UNECE region through a searchable web-based database. The database will also facilitate the MIPAA review and

appraisal process as policy measures shared by SWGA members with the Secretariat will be included in the database.

Task forces

NFPAs have the opportunity to propose and join SWGA task forces, leading on the development of new products and guidelines related to their area(s) of expertise. Information about active task forces under SWGA is available [here](#). NFPAs are invited to express their interest in joining task forces by contacting the secretariat at unece.ageing@un.org.

Annual calendar of events

| | |
|------------------|--|
| March | Online policy dialogue on ageing (in conjunction with UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development) |
| June | Publication of policy brief on ageing and online policy dialogue on the same topic |
| September | Online policy dialogue on ageing |
| November | SWGA annual meeting and in-depth policy discussion (in-person) |

All events are listed on the UNECE [events page](#) and are shared by email.

MIPAA/RIS review and appraisal

SWGA is mandated to monitor the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing/Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS).

Every five years, countries of the UNECE region undertake an analysis of the current state of implementation of MIPAA/RIS and the actions required to make further progress. SWGA facilitates this process by preparing guidelines for reporting, and the Secretariat compiles and synthesizes all country reports. The last review and appraisal process (4th cycle) was completed in 2022. Country reports and the synthesis report from each of the five-yearly review and appraisal cycles of MIPAA/RIS are available [here](#) on the UNECE website.

The UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing 2022, which took place in Rome, Italy, from 16 to 17 June 2022, completed the fourth review and appraisal cycle (2017–2022). The 2022



Rome Ministerial Declaration, adopted at the Conference, set the policy agenda for MIPAA/RIS implementation for the period 2022–2027.

The fifth review and appraisal will cover the years 2022–2027.

SWGGA Bureau

Every two years, SWGA elects a Bureau and a Chair and Vice-Chair which guide the work of the group between the annual meetings. The Bureau is made up of 8 to 10 representatives from member States. Representatives of civil society and research community also participate as observers. The Bureau meets every spring in person to review



progress and prepare the annual meeting and meets online as needed. The Bureau reports to SWGA on its activities at the annual November meeting. The list of current Bureau members is available [here](#). Bureau elections are held every two years and NFPA interested in joining the Bureau are welcome to contact the Secretariat or a member of the Bureau for more information.

Financing of activities

SWGGA activities are supported by voluntary financial contributions to the Ageing Fund. Countries wishing to contribute are invited to contact the Secretariat at unece.ageing@un.org.

Secretariat and contact

The UNECE Population Unit acts as the Secretariat for SWGA. It organizes and serves as Secretariat for the annual meeting and supports SWGA in the implementation of PoW.

The Population Unit is composed as follows:

- Ms. Lisa Warth, Chief, Population Unit and Secretary to SWGA, lisa.warth@un.org
- Ms. Olga Kharitonova, Programme Management Assistant, olga.kharitonova@un.org
- Ms. Kristen Jeffers, Associate Population Affairs Officer, kristen.jeffers@un.org
- Mr. Philipp Hessel, Associate Population Affairs Officer, philipp.hessel@un.org

Secretariat contact address: unece.ageing@un.org

Population Unit website: <https://unece.org/population>

Twitter/X: https://x.com/pu_unece