Economic and Social Council

Economic Commission for Europe

Standing Working Group on Ageing

Thirteenth meeting
Geneva, 19 and 20 November 2020
Item 6 of the provisional agenda
**The Standing Working Group on Ageing work
programme for the fourth implementation cycle
of the Regional Implementation Strategy for the
Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing –
implemented activities in 2020 and plans for 2021**

Implementation of the work programme of the Standing Working Group on Ageing in 2020

Note by the Secretariat

I.   Introduction

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

2.   The SWGA work programme for the fourth implementation cycle of the MIPAA/RIS in 2018-2022 was adopted at the eleventh meeting of the Working Group in November 2018 (ECE/WG.1/2018/2). The Lisbon Ministerial Declaration (ECE/AC.30/2017/2/Rev.1), endorsed by 46 member States at the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in September 2017 (Lisbon, Portugal), is at the basis of this five-year work programme.

3.   This document is prepared by the secretariat for the thirteenth SWGA meeting. It addresses the implementation of the SWGA programme of work during the year 2020 and outlines plans for 2021, including main outputs for the key areas of activity: policy seminars and in-depths discussions; preparation of policy briefs with good practice examples; capacity development; and monitoring implementation of MIPAA/RIS and strengthening the evidence base for policymaking.

II. Implementation of the main elements of the work programme for 2020

A. International cooperation, exchange of experience and policy discussion

1. Policy seminars on ageing

4.   The Policy seminars on ageing became a regular part of the SWGA Work Programme 2018-2022 following highly positive feedback by the SWGA members after the first event in November 2018. The seminars are usually held back-to-back with the annual meetings of the SWGA. The third Policy seminar on ageing will be held on 18 November 2020 on the topic "Older persons in emergency situations: lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic". The topic was ranked first in the March-April 2020 consultation with the SWGA members on topics for Policy seminars.

5.   The third Policy seminar will provide an opportunity for SWGA members to reflect on the lessons learned thus far from the COVID-19 pandemic with regards to safeguarding the human rights of older persons in emergency situations. The issues discussed will include: access to essential goods and health and long-term care services, sensitivity to needs and preferences, and ensuring that mental well-being and dignity of older persons are safeguarded. Due to the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic situation the 2020 seminar most likely will be held online as a series of webinars.

2. Policy briefs

6.   The ECE series of Policy Briefs on Ageing provides information on policies and promotes an exchange of good practice examples among member States regarding different areas of MIPAA/RIS. The Policy Briefs integrate a wealth of contributions and experiences from member States. All published Policy Briefs are available on the ECE website.[1]

7.   Since the twelfth meeting of the Working Group in November 2019, two Policy Briefs - No. 23 on the topic "Gender Equality in Ageing Societies" and No. 24 "Ageing in Sustainable and Smart Cities" - were finalized and published electronically in the first part of 2020. Austria and France have provided translations of Policy Brief No. 23 into German and French, respectively. France also provided the French version of Policy Brief No. 24.

8.   The Policy Brief No. 25 "Older Persons in Emergency Situations" is being developed and will be issued in support of the third Policy seminar discussions. Topics for the next two issues of the Policy Brief series were agreed at the twelfth SWGA meeting in 2019: No. 26 will focus on ageing in a digital era (to be issued in 2021) and No. 27 will be dedicated to mainstreaming ageing.

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

1. Guidelines for mainstreaming ageing

9.   At its eleventh meeting the Working Group on Ageing decided to include the development of guidelines on mainstreaming ageing in its programme of work for 2019-2020 and to establish a Task Force to guide this work. The Task Force on Mainstreaming Ageing was instituted in spring 2019 and includes representatives of the following ECE member States: Austria, Belarus, Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Spain. In addition, three NGOs participate: Ardager Kazakhstan, ILC Canada, and Turbota pr litnih v Ukraini from Ukraine.

10.   The initial work of the Task Force members included a stocktaking exercise of national practices and experience gained in their own countries with a follow-up request to

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[1] Available from http://www.unece.org/population/ageing/policybriefs.html .

all WGA members. By March 2020, country notes on mainstreaming ageing practices were received from 22 member States providing a basis for drafting the guidelines.

11. A zero draft of the guidelines developed by a consultant in close cooperation with the Task Force and the secretariat was submitted for consultation with the SWGA members in July 2020. The revised draft reflecting comments and suggestions received from member States and invited experts by mid-September will be submitted for endorsement at the plenary session of the SWGA meeting in November 2020. The guidelines will be launched in the first part of 2021.

2. Road maps for mainstreaming ageing

12. Road maps for mainstreaming ageing, developed in collaboration with member States at their request, provide a guide through which the country in question can enhance implementation of the commitments of MIPAA/RIS taking into account specificities of the country.

13. In 2019, the Government of Kazakhstan requested ECE to prepare a Road Map in support of developing a national strategy on ageing. A desk study was conducted in late 2019 and was followed by a field mission to Kazakhstan (26-31 January 2020) during which discussions with government representatives and various stakeholder groups were held to inform the preparation of the Road Map for mainstreaming ageing. A consultant was hired to conduct a media analysis of print, online, radio and TV news content to examine the representation of older persons and coverage of ageing issues in general.

14. The work on the draft of the Road Map and further consultations with the Kazakh Government experts were interrupted due to funding issues and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Road Map document is now planned to be finalised in the first part of 2021 and will include an assessment of challenges faced by institutional and home-based long-term care during the pandemic. A pilot of a rapid assessment of COVID-19 related challenges for long-term care in Kazakhstan will be undertaken in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

C. Monitoring implementation of MIPAA/RIS and strengthening the evidence base for policymaking

15. The last biennial computation and revision of the Active Ageing Index (AAI) datasets for European Union (EU) countries was prepared in spring 2019 and provided index values disaggregated by gender for five points in time: 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016 (issued as 2010 AAI – 2018 AAI). In the run-up to the fourth review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS, the computations of the 2020 AAI will be run in early 2021, providing that the underlying surveys are completed in time. The number of non-EU countries for which AAI is computed has been increasing, with Belarus and Kazakhstan including the AAI into the core monitoring framework of their national action plans on ageing. The guidelines on application of AAI in non-EU countries and at subnational level support these new initiatives.

16. Some ECE countries also followed up with the AAI calculations at the subnational level. In August 2020, National Statistical Office of Italy (ISTAT) published an e-book "Active Ageing and Living Conditions of Older People in Italy" (in Italian) that presents the AAI results from 2007 to 2018 with disaggregation by region and gender, and offers thematic insights and analysis of individual indicators.

17. 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 Focal Points – the GGP Council of Partners. In this capacity, the ECE secretariat co-organized a virtual meeting of the Council of Partners on 24 June 2020. GGP team representatives from 32 countries actively participated in the meeting with a further 100 participants following the discussions online. As the co-ordinator of the GGP Council of Partners, the ECE secretariat performs a bridging function between those responsible for programme management and development and those in charge of its implementation at the national level.

18.   The ECE handles data submissions by national teams, and processes applications by scientists and experts who wish to use GGP data for their research.[2] 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 AAI indicators in some contexts and supported some policy measures addressing low fertility and intergenerational equity concerns. The GGS data are also used in computing several Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators.

COVID-19 and older persons

19.   Many international organizations, civil society associations and research networks have been developing dedicated resources drawing attention to the situation of older persons during the COVID-19 pandemic. To facilitate access to relevant information, the secretariat has compiled a list of publications and resource pages which is continuously updated as situation develops.[3] The secretariat also provided inputs, including good practice examples from SWGA members, to the drafting group of the Secretary-General's policy brief "The Impact of COVID-19 on older persons" launched on 1 May 2020.[4]

D.   Preparations and launch of the fourth review and appraisal cycle of MIPAA/RIS

20.   The Secretary-General's report on Modalities for the fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 (E/CN.5/2020/4) and the subsequent ECOSOC resolution on the same topic (E/RES/2020/8), endorsed the timeline for carrying out the fourth review and appraisal of MIPAA, in which it is determined that the national reviews will take place in 2021, the regional review events in 2022 with a global review concluding the appraisal in 2023. The resolution in its paragraph 3 "Invites Member States to identify actions they have taken since the third review and appraisal exercise, with the aim of presenting this information to the regional commissions during 2022, and invites each Member State to decide for itself the actions or activities it intends to review, utilizing a bottom-up participatory approach".

21.   The ECE guidelines for preparation of national reports were disseminated by the Bureau of the Working Group in September 2020 and with this the fourth review and appraisal cycle of the MIPAA/RIS was launched in ECE region. The guidelines were prepared by a drafting group lead by the Bureau member from Austria with active involvement of Bureau members representing Norway and NGOs. The draft of the guidelines was extensively discussed at the Bureau meeting in April and at a dedicated ad-hoc Bureau meeting in June 2020.

22.   Member States will be expected to submit their national reports on the progress of MIPAA/RIS implementation in September 2021. The timely submission of national reports and their adherence to the guidelines will be crucial for the secretariat's work on a synthesis report for the fourth review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS.

III.   Conclusions

23.   The 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration provided an important framework of reference to streamline activities in implementing and monitoring MIPAA/RIS in the ECE region. The key role of the ECE Working Group on Ageing as the facilitator of MIPAA/RIS implementation in the region has been reconfirmed by the ECOSOC resolution 2020/19 that

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[2] Data can be accessed by registered users at www.ggp-i.org.

[3] http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/age/Covid-19/Covid19_OlderPersons.pdf

[4] https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_policy_brief_on_covid-19_and_older_persons_1_may_2020.pdf

endorsed the revised terms of reference and the change of name to a Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGA).

24.   The ongoing liquidity crisis faced by the United Nations secretariat and the measures undertaken by the Secretary-General to manage the financial situation of the Organization impacted the implementation of ECE secretariat activities in 2020, i.e. the preparation of the Road Map on mainstreaming ageing in Kazakhstan. However, the recent financial and in-kind contributions in support of SWGA by member States helped to ensure the implementation of most foreseen activities this year. Since the twelfth meeting the financial contributions for the 'Ageing – phase 3' fund in support of the SWGA work programme in 2020-2022 amounted to more than USD 270,000 and were received from Austria, Estonia, Germany, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland.

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