



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

Geneva, 22 and 23 November 2021

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Work of the Bureau**Report on the thirteenth meeting of the Bureau of the
Standing Working Group on Ageing****Note by the Secretariat****I. Opening of the meeting and adoption of agenda**

1. The spring Bureau meeting took place on 23-24 March 2021 and was held online. The Bureau members from the following member States participated in the meeting: France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Slovenia, and Spain. The Austrian representative was excused. Mr. Kai Leichsenring, European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research (European Centre Vienna), and Ms. Heidrun Mollenkopf, AgePlatform Europe, participated on behalf of research and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), respectively. In addition, a team of four representatives of Italy, host country of the 2022 Ministerial Conference, took part in the meeting.

2. Mr. Edmundo Martinho, Portugal, Chair of the Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGA) and Ms. Lidia Bratanova, Director of ECE Statistical division, greeted the participants and opened the meeting. The Bureau adopted the agenda of the meeting without modifications. The secretariat acted as co-moderator throughout the online meeting.

**II. Brief exchange on national initiatives / responses related to
COVID-19 and older persons and the advancement with the
review process of the Madrid International Plan of Action on
Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy**

3. The roundtable exchange following the opening of the meeting was dedicated to national responses and civil society initiatives related to COVID-19 and older persons. Bureau members briefly informed on national situations given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, in particular with regards to a third wave and vaccination programmes, and the advancement with the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS). Most countries represented in the Bureau have now begun their respective MIPAA/RIS review process and are on track to submit their national reports by the end of September 2021. They also reported about the planned/ongoing involvement of civil society and academia in the review.



III. Milestones for the fourth review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing at the ECE regional level

4. The secretariat took note of the progress with national review processes and countries' efforts to employ participatory approach in preparing national reports on MIPAA/RIS implementation. The preparation of a Synthesis report – to be issued ahead of the Ministerial Conference - will depend on a timely submission of national reports. The submission deadline is 30 September 2021. The ECE regional review will conclude with the Ministerial Conference on Ageing (tentatively planned for May-June 2022) and adoption of a ministerial declaration outlining the goals for the next five-year period.

5. The secretariat briefly presented a timeline for preparation of the 2022 Ministerial Conference. To ensure smooth preparations, the Bureau decided to hold quarterly online meetings during the year. The next Bureau meeting will take place on 24 June 2021.

6. To support and guide host country team with preparations for the 2022 Ministerial Conference, the Bureau members formed two groups: Declaration Drafting Group (DDG) – Austria, France, Germany, Norway, Portugal, representatives of researchers and NGOs; and Conference Content Group (CCG) – Ireland, Italy, Republic of Moldova, Slovenia, Spain, representatives of researchers and NGOs. Coordinators for both groups were elected. Norway will coordinate the DDG, with Germany acting as co-coordinator. Italy will act as coordinator for the CCG, with the Republic of Moldova acting as co-coordinator. The secretariat will assist both groups as required.

7. Bureau members agreed that a draft declaration and Conference content should be first reviewed informally in conjunction with national focal points in May and August-September 2021. The final concept note and a draft provisional agenda of the Conference along with an outline of the declaration will then be presented at the first briefing to member States in October 2021. The formal consultations on a draft Declaration will be launched following the discussion at the SWGA meeting in November 2021.

IV. Preparations for the 2022 Ministerial Conference on Ageing

A. Revised concept note for the Conference

8. The host-country team of the 2022 Ministerial Conference presented the revised concept note to Bureau members. The Bureau briefly discussed the proposed format of the Conference and some aspects of its logistics. Bureau members stressed the importance for both the Conference and the Research and Civil Society Forum to take place in the same venue. The chosen venue must meet the requirements for the United Nations high-level meetings as per the host-country agreement. Preparations for the Conference should be made with an option for member States to attend and join events online, should physical-distancing measures or travel restrictions remain in place due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The secretariat reiterated the importance of adhering to agreed preparation schedule with the Conference going ahead, either in-person or online, in May or June 2022. In case of some extraordinary circumstances, the host country might ask the Standing Working Group on Ageing at its annual meeting in November 2021 to consider a possibility of postponing the Conference to autumn of 2022.

B. Concept note for the joint Research and Civil Society Forum

9. The representatives of NGOs and research community shared the concept note for the joint Research and Civil Society Forum “Ageing during the COVID-19 Pandemic”. Suggestions from Bureau members included: amending the title to be more future-oriented and considering involvement of policymakers, in a bid to unite the three sectors and overcome silos.

C. Title and main panel themes of the Conference

10. Bureau members pointed out that the proposed title for the Ministerial Conference “Ageing Well: Moving Forward to Bridge the Gaps, Face the Challenges, and Seizing the Opportunities of an Ageing Society” was too long and rather ineffectively reflected the topics to be discussed at the Conference. During the discussion numerous suggestions for a title and Conference themes were collected. They included using “society for all ages” within the title to continue and build upon previous conferences and declarations, changing the proposed third theme of the Conference to address equity and discuss SDGs generally rather than “eradicating poverty” specifically, and amending the themes to include mainstream ageing, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the importance of collaboration and partnerships. It was agreed that the Conference Content Group will lead discussion on the title and themes for the Ministerial Conference via email exchange and come up with a proposal by early May 2021.

D. Draft ministerial declaration: structure, core elements, length

11. The secretariat reflected on the experience with drafting and negotiating previous ministerial declarations and guided Bureau members on the structure and purpose of the declaration. Bureau members agreed that the DDG would begin drafting the Declaration in parallel with Ministerial Conference preparations, including finalising title and themes, in partnership with the host country team.

V. Operationalizing Guidelines for mainstreaming ageing

12. The secretariat presented an update following the launch of the “Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing” on 16 March 2021. Portugal is going to present the Guidelines at the eleventh session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing in New York. The Chair also informed the Bureau that a side event for the Guidelines at the EU Social Summit taking place in Porto in May 2021 is being considered. Multiple Bureau members offered their support and willingness to participate in any event for the Guidelines at the Summit. The secretariat will facilitate preparations for this, and will update Bureau members when further clarifications and confirmation has been received from the Summit Organisers.

13. Several Bureau members shared they will be using the Guidelines as part of an ongoing or planned review of their respective national strategies on ageing. Also, the Bureau member from Germany informed that a translation of the Guidelines into German was being prepared, and encourage other members to begin translations in their national languages. The Republic of Moldova will explore the possibility to prepare a translation into Romanian.

14. The secretariat presented ideas for a toolkit to accompany the main Guidelines document. Bureau members agreed on the proposed elements, encouraging the secretariat to create both an interactive online toolkit as well as a PDF version. Further suggestions included more detailed mapping on synergies in the toolkit. The secretariat plans to prepare the toolkit for Stage 1 of the Guidelines in autumn 2021. In addition, a capacity-building workshop will be organised for national focal points on ageing, civil society members and other stakeholders in relation to Mainstreaming Ageing and the Guidelines.

VI. Update on other work programme activities of the Standing Working Group in 2021

A. Policy Brief No. 26 “Ageing in the digital era”

15. The secretariat informed Bureau members that an issue paper in relation to Policy Brief No. 26 has been drafted and work is now being undertaken to transform it into a more inclusive policy brief. The secretariat requested Bureau members to provide additional good

practice examples in particular on the theme of ethical use of digital technology to be referred to in the Policy Brief.

B. Kazakh pilot study on a rapid assessment of COVID-19 impact on long-term care provision

16. The secretariat informed the Bureau that work for the Road Map project for Kazakhstan was halted in early 2020 due to Covid-19 related restrictions and lack of financial and human resources. It is expected to restart shortly and the completed Road Map for Mainstreaming Ageing in Kazakhstan to be published this year.

17. In conjunction with the Road Map project, a Kazakh pilot study on a rapid assessment of the COVID-19 impact on long-term care provision has been undertaken thanks to the funding received from the ECE regular programme of technical cooperation. The results of a study will be reflected in the Road Map and published as a working paper.

C. Webinars to support preparation of national reports on implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy in 2018-2022

18. The secretariat informed about the plans to hold a series of three webinars/online workshops over April-June period to support countries in their preparation of national reports on MIPAA/RIS implementation. Ms Heidrun Mollenkopf, representative of NGOs, introduced the first online workshop 'Making participation meaningful: bringing governments and civil society together' that takes place on 21 April 2021. It's being organized jointly by ECE, BAGSO, AGE Platform Europe, the NGO Committee on Ageing Geneva and the German Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ). The concept note and save-the-date invitation have been already shared with SWGA members and observers by the ECE secretariat. For this workshop, the interpretation into English, French, Russian and German will be provided thanks to the BAGSO/German Government funding. The secretariat informed that concept notes for the next two webinars are in the process of being finalised and dates and further details will be shared with SWGA members in due time.

D. Visibility of the Standing Working Group on Ageing and communication activities

19. The secretariat shared information on communication activities and efforts to raise the SWGA visibility. Among them, introduction of new dedicated webpages on Mainstreaming ageing and on MIPAA+20 on the UNECE website; regular e-mail updates to SWGA and partner organizations as well as active exchange on twitter and other social media; planned briefings to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva.

VII. Update on the United Nations financial situation and human resource implications for the secretariat

20. The secretariat updated the Bureau on 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. At the core of it is a temporary suspension of hiring for all regular budget vacant positions and 90 per cent expense freeze on non-post items. This directly affects the regular budget P2 post in the Population Unit which became vacant in January after a staff member resigned. The hiring for this post planned through a Managed Reassignment Programme has been suspended and the post most likely will not be filled until September 2021. This situation limits the secretariat's capacity to support the implementation of the SWGA work programme. Fortunately, the additional country contributions received

to the Ageing-Phase III fund in 2020-2021, allowed to engage the professional at P3 level on a temporary full-time contract as of February 2021 (previously working at 50 per cent).

21. Bureau members questioned what could be done to ensure adequate staffing of the secretariat and ensure stability following the retirement of the Chief of Population Unit in June 2022. The secretariat reiterated that the current situation is related to the liquidity issues experienced by the United Nations secretariat while the two regular-budget positions, P5 and P2, has been and are expected to be approved by the General Assembly within the ECE Programme Budget for 2021 and 2022 respectively.

VIII. Decisions, summary and closing of the meeting

22. The Chair with the help of secretariat summarized the main elements of the discussions and reviewed the decisions and action points. The Bureau adopted the draft decisions.

23. The Bureau thanked the secretariat for preparing and moderating the online meeting.

24. The next quarterly session of the Bureau is planned to take place online on 24 June 2021. Exact details will be communicated closer to the time.

Annex I

Decisions taken at the second quarter session of the Bureau of the Standing Working Group on Ageing on 24 June 2021

The second quarter session of the Bureau took place on 24 June 2021 and was held online. The Bureau members from the following member States participated in the meeting: France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Republic of Moldova, Slovenia, and Spain. The Chair, Mr. Edmundo Martinho (Portugal), was excused and represented by his representative. Mr. Kai Leichsenring, European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research (European Centre Vienna), and Ms. Heidrun Mollenkopf, Age Platform Europe, participated on behalf of research and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), respectively. In addition, a team of four representatives of Italy, host country of the 2022 Ministerial Conference, took part in the meeting. The session was chaired by the Vice-chair Mr. Alexis Rinckenbach (France).

- Date and place for the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing was confirmed by the host country – it will be held in Rome, Italy, on 16 and 17 June 2022.
- The joint Civil Society and Scientific Research Forum will precede the Conference and take place on 15 June 2022.
- The working title of the Conference was discussed and agreed – “A sustainable world for all ages: joining forces for solidarity and equal opportunities throughout life”.
- The Conference Content Group presented a draft on the Conference content and structure. It was discussed and accepted with some proposed changes. The themes for the expert panels were proposed as follows:
 - (1) Promoting active and healthy ageing throughout life;
 - (2) Ensuring access to long-term care, and support to families and caregivers;
 - (3) Mainstreaming ageing to advance a society for all ages.
- The Declaration Drafting Group presented a draft text for the Ministerial Declaration. The general format and content were discussed at length. Due to limited time, it was agreed to have additional online drafting sessions and revise the document according to the received comments.
- The secretariat will facilitate the drafting process and before the end of July will share the two documents – a zero draft of the Ministerial Declaration and a draft on the Conference content and structure - with members of the Standing Working Group for review and comments. The deadline for comments is 15 September 2021.
- Draft Provisional Agenda for the 14th meeting of the Standing Working Group on Ageing (22-23 November 2021, Geneva) was presented, discussed, and agreed upon taking into account that the current hybrid mode allows for usual morning and afternoon three-hour sessions with interpretation.
- The next quarterly session of the Bureau will take place at the end of September. The date will be confirmed later.