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**Monitoring policy responses to population ageing  
in UNECE region**

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## **Monitoring policy responses to population ageing in UNECE region**

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), founded in 1947, is one of five Regional Commissions of the United Nations. It provides its member States' governments (the countries of Western and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as Canada, Israel and the United States of America) with a systematic and institutionalised opportunity to work together to seek practical solutions to common challenges in areas such as environment, energy, statistics, trade, transportation, gender and population. At the UNECE Population Unit we work to promote policy dialogue among the UNECE member States on various facets of demographic change in the region, with a particular focus on ageing and on the relationships between generations and between genders. Our main task is to support the implementation of the United Nations Plans of Action, strategies and other agreements on population issues and to contribute to better-informed policymaking by organising programmes of data collection, analysis and research.

This paper draws on the UNECE Population programme experience and provides a brief overview of main monitoring tools and guidelines for implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS) at a national level, specifically Road Maps for Mainstreaming Ageing and the Active Ageing Index (AAI). We briefly review the regional and national coordination work done in developing both, Road Map and AAI projects, how different stakeholders have been included in this, as well as ways to use the outcomes of these projects in the third review and appraisal exercise of MIPAA/RIS and in support of developing relevant policy measures.

### **From international policy frameworks to national strategies on ageing**

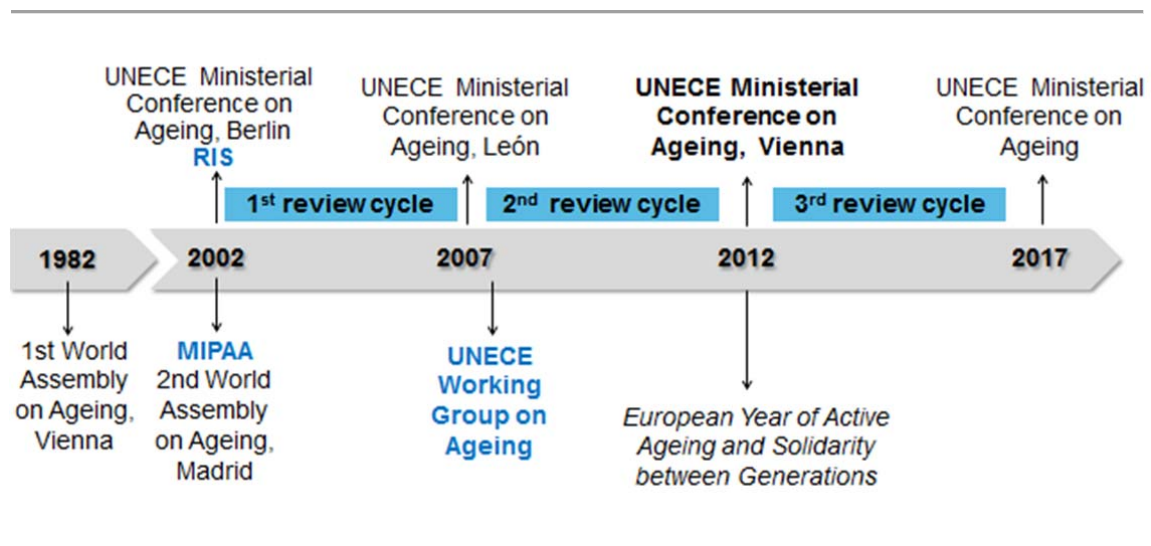
Over the last decades ageing has emerged as a profound societal process in many of the UNECE countries due to the interplay of increasing life expectancies, declining/(very) low fertility levels, and migration as well as changing institutional frameworks. In 2002, in Berlin, UNECE countries agreed on the Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) — the main global policy framework to direct the response to population ageing adopted by the second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002. MIPAA/RIS imply a review of the progress made in their implementation at national and regional level every five years. The ten commitments of the Regional Implementation Strategy for MIPAA are:

1. To mainstream ageing in all policy fields with the aim of bringing societies and economies into harmony with demographic change to achieve a society for all ages
2. To ensure full integration and participation of older persons in society
3. To promote equitable and sustainable economic growth in response to population ageing
4. To adjust social protection systems in response to demographic changes and their social and economic consequences

5. To enable labour markets to respond to the economic and social consequences of population ageing
6. To promote life-long learning and adapt the educational system in order to meet the changing economic, social and demographic conditions
7. To strive to ensure quality of life at all ages and maintain independent living including health and well-being
8. To mainstream a gender approach in an ageing society
9. To support families that provide care for older persons and to promote intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity among their members
10. To promote the implementation and follow-up of the Regional Implementation Strategy through regional co-operation.

These commitments were reaffirmed by the UNECE member States' governments in the two subsequent ministerial declarations León (2007) and Vienna (2012) that took into account the progress made over the respective five-year implementation cycles and called for more focused actions over the next five-year period. The third MIPAA/RIS implementation cycle will conclude in 2017 and its review and appraisal exercise is currently under way.

Figure 1. **Policy responses: from international frameworks to national strategies**



### UNECE role in guiding and monitoring policy responses to population ageing

The UNECE region is highly diverse in its economic and societal development and includes countries that embarked on a deep transformation after the collapse of the socialist centrally planned systems. In many of the latter countries the full appreciation of ongoing demographic change and the need for comprehensive policies to address population ageing came to the fore only in the 2000s thanks in part to their greater involvement in the international population-issues-related programmes. The UNECE Working Group on Ageing (WGA),

established in 2008 as an intergovernmental body for regional cooperation in the implementation and monitoring of MIPAA/RIS, played a notable role in this. The Working Group on Ageing acts as a platform for regionally focused exchange of experience among 56 UNECE countries and provides concrete expertise in developing national action plans (Road Maps) and specific policy measures.

In recent years UNECE member States embraced active ageing as a central political concept that weighs in the opportunities and not only the challenges of the long-living societies. It became the core for the third implementation cycle of MIPAA/RIS in the UNECE region with the 2012 Vienna Ministerial Declaration ‘Ensuring Society for All Ages: Promoting quality of life and active ageing’.<sup>1</sup> The declaration groups the necessary policy actions under four main goals: (I) Longer working life is encouraged and ability to work is maintained; (II) Participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older persons are promoted; (III) Dignity, health and independence in older age are promoted and safeguarded; and (IV) Intergenerational solidarity is maintained and enhanced. To support monitoring these policy responses at national and regional levels, UNECE engaged in developing a multidimensional composite indicator that aims to measure active ageing outcomes and shows the unrealised potential of older members of society — the Active Ageing Index (AAI).

### **Road Maps for Mainstreaming Ageing**

Road Maps are developed by UNECE upon request from a country. The Road Map assesses the state of the MIPAA/RIS implementation in the country and provides recommendations for concrete actions in all the key areas taking into account the country’s economic, social, cultural and political context.

One of the distinctive features of the Road Map project is that it implies in-depth analysis of the situation in a given country in the areas defined by the ten commitments of RIS with a participatory approach, meaning that all the major stakeholders, namely government, civil society, social partners and the private sector, and older people themselves are consulted directly throughout the whole process of the Road Map preparation.

The Road Map preparation includes several steps, starting with a desk study done by UNECE and by engaged consultants on specific areas such as, for example, analysis of the image of older persons in the country’s media or housing and transportation accessibility for older persons. The next step includes field visits to run face-to-face consultations and interviews with the stakeholders and hold focus group discussions. Based on both, the desk study and the field visits, the Road Map featuring the current state of affairs and providing a set of recommendations for concrete actions in each area is developed. The draft document is submitted for consultations with the stakeholders in a country, is reviewed by the UNECE Working Group on Ageing, and the final recommendations are presented to the respective government. The Terms of Reference for Road Maps state that “participating countries agree to implement the recommendations made in the Road Map and to adopt the final Road Map

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/age/Ministerial\\_Conference\\_Vienna/Documents/ECE.AC.30-2012-3.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/age/Ministerial_Conference_Vienna/Documents/ECE.AC.30-2012-3.pdf)

document”. The government may choose to transfer the recommendations into a national action plan on ageing (Armenia, Republic of Moldova, Georgia — all used this opportunity).

The next step, now ongoing for Armenia (the first country to request the development of the Road Map from UNECE and to adopt the Plan of Action in 2012), is the evaluation of the implementation of the Road Map. The evaluation, as is the preparation of the Road Map itself, is run based on a participatory approach, i.e. it implies consultations, both electronic and face-to-face, with all the key stakeholders during a field visit. The evaluation aims at identifying the main areas in which recommendations and planned actions have been or have not been implemented, the reasons for either success or setback, and encouraging the respective government to continue a more in-depth evaluation of implementation of individual recommendations.

### **Active Ageing Index**

Another instrument for monitoring MIPAA/RIS implementation is the Active Ageing Index (AAI).<sup>2</sup> The Active Ageing Index measures to what extent the potential of older persons to participate in the economy and society through paid activities (employment), unpaid activities (social participation), and living independently is used, as well as to what extent the environment the older people live in enables them to age actively. The index is constructed of 22 individual indicators aggregated into four domains. The domains are in line with the four goals of the Vienna Ministerial Declaration on Ageing. To capture the difference in the active ageing outcomes for men and women the data are disaggregated by sex.

The AAI project is a joint project by UNECE and the European Commission’s Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL). First developed in 2012 in close cooperation with the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research and calculated for the 27 (at that time) countries of the European Union, the index has been extended in time and geographically covering all 28 EU countries, but also Canada, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and the United States of America.<sup>3</sup> The index has been calculated for three points in time, namely using data from 2008, 2010 and 2012. The main research partner for that stage was Prof. Asghar Zaidi at Southampton University (2013-2016). The pilot studies have been run also for Georgia, Serbia and Turkey. The extension of the coverage, both to more UNECE countries and in time, will continue under the third phase of the project launched in May 2016.

The work on AAI has been carried out with active involvement of an Expert Group on AAI which brings together representatives of all major stakeholders — policymakers, civil society, researchers, statisticians, international organisations.<sup>4</sup> The Group meets regularly (at least once a year) in order to discuss the ongoing work and exchange views on the issues of methodology, interpretation, promotion of AAI use, and others.

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<sup>2</sup> Please visit <http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/AAI/Active+Ageing+Index+Home> for detailed information on the Active Ageing Index

<sup>3</sup> Given the lack of data for some of the countries the indicators had to be adjusted using variables as close to the original ones as possible.

<sup>4</sup> Please visit <http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/AAI/VI.+Documentation> for the list of the Expert Group members.

Though AAI was construed based on data mainly from surveys carried out at a national level, it can also be calculated at a subnational level — regional or local (municipal). This is of particular relevance as it is best to monitor the implementation of ageing policies where they are most often carried out, i.e. at a subnational level. The work continues as for the development of guidelines for subnational calculation of the 22 indicators, 4 domain scores and the overall index. A pilot study of AAI for 30 territorial entities in Germany has been carried out by a research consultant at Dortmund Technical University. The pilot study will provide an actual basis for the guidelines development.

### **Combining both instruments: support for developing national policies and monitoring their outcomes**

As mentioned earlier, every five years, countries of the UNECE region assess the current state of implementation of MIPAA/RIS and define the actions required to make further progress. The third review and appraisal exercise is currently under way and the governments are preparing their national reports to be submitted by 31 October 2016. The Population Unit will synthesise the findings in the regional report to the Ministerial Conference on Ageing in September 2017.

The UNECE Working Group on Ageing agreed to include the indicators of AAI as a basis for the statistical annex to national reports on MIPAA/RIS implementation to make the reports more homogeneous in terms of statistical data. In this regard UNECE organised two workshops for the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia, and Western Balkans in order to provide consultations on identifying and collecting data for the AAI indicators.<sup>5</sup> Including the AAI indicators in the current reporting process will pave the way for a more consistent monitoring of the active ageing outcomes in the forthcoming MIPAA/RIS implementation cycles.

The first actual examples of using AAI for monitoring the implementation of national strategies and programmes based on the Road Map for Mainstreaming Ageing recommendations are emerging. For instance, the Republic of Moldova's Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, UNFPA, and Demographic Research Centre (Chisinau) have been working actively in cooperation with the AAI project team to develop the Active Ageing Index since November 2014. The first results were released recently and the index is planned to be used as a tool for measuring the efficiency of ageing policies, specifically the Road Map on Ageing and its Action Plan on mainstreaming ageing into sectorial policies. In Georgia, the pilot study on developing AAI was run in parallel with the Road Map project and estimated active ageing indicators — rather an incomplete set of them at the time — provided an important evidence base for the Road Map and helped to engage the policymakers as well as other stakeholders in designing the Plan of Action on Ageing. In June 2016, Georgia's Parliamentary Committee on Health and Social issues approved the Plan of Action on Ageing and forwarded it to the Government for implementation.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=40393#> and [http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42481#](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42481#/).

The Road Maps and the Plans of Action on Ageing are important steps to raise awareness for the issues of older persons in many countries of the eastern part of the UNECE region and help them to develop comprehensive policy responses. Mainstreaming ageing remains an ongoing process that requires continuous attention and efforts. The monitoring tools such as AAI are helpful instruments for sustaining the attention of policymakers, social partners, civil society and the broader public.