

Guiding questions for the twelfth session of the General Assembly open-ended working group for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons

Focus area 1: Contribution of older persons to sustainable development

The Scope:

Older persons have the right to contribute to sustainable development. The right to participate in, and contribute to, development is affirmed in the Declaration on the Right to Development. Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognizes the right to participate in public affairs. Effective and meaningful participation enables the advancement of all human rights. On the other hand, when older persons are denied the ability or opportunity to contribute, or when their contribution is unrecognized or devalued, their dignity is denied. Understanding the contribution of older persons to sustainable development as a right enables States to identify steps that can be taken to uphold their dignity.

Substantive guiding questions:

National Legal and Policy Framework

1. What are the legal provisions, policy frameworks in your country that recognize older persons' right to participate in and contribute to sustainable development? This could include, but is not limited to:

- ensuring that relevant human rights (in particular the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right of access to information, and the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association) are protected and implemented;
- protecting and enhancing civic space and collaboration with civil society that represents the voices of older persons in sustainable development;
- good practices to ensure older persons' participation in, and contribution to sustainable development.

The German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) is the national policy framework to implement the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. Accompanied by a very broad participatory consultation process, the GSDS has been carefully reviewed in 2015/2016 in all its essential elements. It has been structured along the 17 SDGs, including the targets and indicators. The 2021 update provides the basis for the reinforced sustainability policy that is required for the Decade of Action (2020–30) called for by the UN Secretary-General. The updated Strategy contains 75 indicators and corresponding targets (<https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/992814/1875176/3d3b15cd92d0261e7a0bc8f43b7839/deutsche-nachhaltigkeitsstrategie-2021-langfassung-download-bpa-data.pdf?download=1>).

The Strategy emphasizes the need to set high ambitions when Sustainable Development is the guiding principle behind the policies of the German Government. As a goal and yardstick of governmental action at nation, European and international levels, it has to be observed when enacting measures in all policy fields. The planetary boundaries of our Earth together with the objective of a dignified life for all form the ultimate constraints of political decisions.

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The ambitious update of the GSDS in 2021 adopted by the Federal Government is an important step for German sustainable development policy, in particularly as it clearly defines priority spheres of action in six areas of transformation. These areas are linked to a number of the 2030 Agenda goals, and emphasize how change in one affects the others. The six areas of transformation are the following:

- (1) The human well-being and capabilities; social justice
- (2) The energy transition and climate action
- (3) A further area of transformation, the circular economy responds to the need to decouple growth from resource consumption. Consumption and production must remain within the boundaries of our planet.
- (4) Construction and buildings, as well as the transport sectors are addressed as part of the sustainable building and mobility transition transformation area.
- (5) A holistic perspective is required to achieve progress in the sustainable agricultural and food systems transformation area.
- (6) A pollutant-free environment provides the basis for health and well-being, including both physical and mental health.

The German Government regards sustainability as a community project that should involve all social stakeholders.

Stakeholders from civil society (the public, trade unions, religious organizations and civic associations) are an integral part of achieving sustainability in many different ways, and are involved continually. The GSDG contains partly indicators for different ages, inter alia concerning the employment rate of 20 to 64-year olds and additional the rate concerning older people (60 to 64-year-olds). Apart from that the strategy does not focus on the specific needs of certain groups of society or age classes.

The progress made in implementing the German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) are reported and the Strategy is enhanced regularly: Every two years, the Federal Statistical Office publishes an Indicator Report. The Office is responsible for the technical analysis of the indicators and their development.

The GSDS is updated once per legislative period, as part of a comprehensive system of reporting. These reports evaluate progress with implementation, contain specific measures to achieve the set targets, and further develop the Strategy.

The reports are made available to the German Bundestag for information purposes.

More information about policy of older persons in Germany, about challenges, the situation, measures taken etc. can also be found in the country report of the Federal Republic of Germany to the UNECE under: <https://unece.org/statistics/documents/2022/01/reports/mipaa20-report-germany>.

Examples for good practice in Germany for older persons' participation in development are as follows:

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Developing good policies for and with older persons – for every generation – is a key priority for the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (*BMFSFJ*). The way in which this can be achieved was discussed, among others, during the consultations of the [Commission on Equivalent Living Conditions](#) (site in German only) and its technical working groups. One of the measures adopted to implement the findings of this government commission addresses the sense of community and solidarity between citizens at municipal level: “Attractive municipalities thrive on a sense of community and solidarity between the generations – creating related structures that enable people to “care for each other” and networking services in the social space in an integrated and intelligent way can be factors enabling liveable municipalities to retain and attract residents. By creating good framework conditions, the Federal Government will support municipalities on their path and in developing this social infrastructure.”

In implementing this measure, the *BMFSFJ* is engaged in dialogue with the *Länder* (federal states), national associations of local authorities, civil society and the research community regarding the potential establishment of integrated social space planning. In this area, the *BMFSFJ* works closely with the German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations (*BAGSO*) in particular. *BAGSO* represents the interests of older generations, especially also with a view to sustainable policy development. The *BMFSFJ* provides funding to the administrative office of *BAGSO* as an umbrella organisation of 120 civil society member organisations.

Social participation and also contributions to sustainable development are increasingly shaped by the digitalisation of all spheres of life. To ensure older persons' participation also under the conditions of digitalisation, the *BMFSFJ* and *BAGSO* launched the [Digital Pact for Old Age](#) (*DigitalPakt Alter*) in 2021. The Digital Pact for Old Age is designed as a longer-term initiative. Its aim is to work with partner organisations from all areas of society to promote a wide range of measures to strengthen digital participation in a cooperative and cross-sectoral manner.

At the start, for example, 100 digital places of learning and discovery for older persons across Germany received funding of 3,000 euros each. In early 2022, companies that “engage” older consumers in an exemplary way in digitalising their products and services will be awarded a prize as part of a competition. Further measures are planned.

Since October 2020 and for a period of two years, the *BMFSFJ* has provided funding of five million euros and three million euros in co-financing to [29 pilot projects](#) (site in German only) designed to counteract involuntary loneliness in old age. The project is primarily aimed at older employees aged 60 and above retiring from work. Its objective is not only to prevent social isolation but also to strengthen financial protection in old age and setting the course for older persons to lead active and self-determined lives.

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Services include neighbourhood assistance, counselling and, above all, digital further education. The wide range of services offered by the projects are intended to strengthen links within society and create places where people can meet, sponsorships can be arranged (“surrogate grandparents”, among others) and voluntary commitment can be expanded (among others, older persons as “carers” for older persons).

EU Regulation 1303/2013 provides for the implementation of cross-cutting objectives that will also include the delivery of the cross-cutting objective of environmental sustainability in each of the 29 projects. An annual review is carried out by means of a progress report and on-the-spot audits and checks.

2. What are the challenges faced by older persons for the realization of their right to contribute to sustainable development at national and international levels?

Every five years, countries in the UNECE region undertake an analysis of the current state of implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action and its Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS) and the actions required to make further progress. The country report of the fourth periodic review and appraisal cycle of MIPAA/RIS prepared in 2021 in preparation of the 2022 regional review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS implementation (MIPAA+20) for Germany is published at the UNECE website <https://unece.org/statistics/documents/2022/01/reports/mipaa20-report-germany> and contains detailed information on the challenges.

3. What data, statistics and research are available regarding older persons’ contribution to sustainable development?

Statistics and data regarding older persons are available for example from the Federal Statistical Office (www.destatis.de) or the Federal Institute for Population Research (www.bib.bund.de). The Federal Government is also providing institutional funding to the German Centre of Gerontology (www.dza.de). The Centre for Ageing’s studies focus on social participation during a person’s lifetime and especially in the second half of this person’s life. The knowledge gained from them forms the basis for social reporting and policy advice. The Centre for Ageing also produces the German Ageing Survey. This is a long-term study into the changes in living situations and the ageing processes that people undergo during the second halves of their lives.

Another Centre for Ageing study is the German Volunteer Survey that forms an essential basis for voluntary activities in all age groups, including older persons.

The German Ageing Survey: Old Age in Germany (80+) intends to comprehensively describe the living situations and quality of living of people who are 80 years old or older. Results are expected to be published at the end of 2022.

Other studies, by various institutes, focus on other topics regarding older persons, like older persons and technology, long term care, etc.

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Equality and non-discrimination

4. What measures are being taken to eliminate ageism, ageist stereotypes, prejudices and behaviors that devalue older persons' contribution to sustainable development?

Under the [New Images of Ageing](#) Programme, which is based on the findings and recommendations of the Sixth Government Report on Older People (“Images of Ageing in Society”), the *BMFSFJ* has continually raised awareness of differentiated, contemporary and, above all, not exclusively deficit-oriented images of age(ing). Its objective is to raise awareness of the vastly diverse lifestyles of older generations and to change the ideas about life in old age, whilst encouraging older persons to contribute their skills to society in a self-determined way. Young persons in particular are encouraged to reassess their perceptions of ageing. Willingness of younger and older generations to learn with and from each other is also promoted. Exchanging realistic perceptions of ageing will form a core aspect of mutual understanding as well as social cohesion. The programme also includes the “What’s ‘old’ anyway?” travelling exhibition, which can be presented in German, English and French and is also shown abroad (www.whats-old-anyway.de). A wide variety of publicity measures (e.g. photo and video competitions, cartoon contests, touring exhibitions, Facebook and Twitter accounts) aim to counteract ageist stereotypes and prejudices in particular, and to promote intergenerational understanding. A [Summary of the Sixth Government Report on Older People is available in English](#).

The national government also gives sustainable funding of the programme multigenerational homes (www.mehrgenerationenhaeuser.de), which has been continuously developed further since it was started in 2006. The approximately 530 multigenerational homes throughout the country are meeting places and contact points with low-threshold counselling, educational and recreational services open to everyone, and promote social participation and cohesion amongst generations and cultures. They provide a place for communal activities, promote volunteering among all age groups and strengthen social cohesion and social participation in the community. Through that, they contribute to eliminate ageism and stereotypes of older persons.

The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency recently commissioned a study on the subject of images of ageing and discrimination. The aim of the Age_ISM Germany project is to generate a data base on the complex of topics "Images of ageing and discrimination". The results are important for politics and research because images of ageing have a demonstrable effect on individual development processes, the participation of older persons in social life and social and cultural progress (Sixth Report on older Persons of the Federal Government, 2010). Results of the study are expected in the end of 2022.

Please also see answers to the questionnaire “Focus area 2: Economic security”.

Remedies and Redress

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5. What mechanisms are necessary, or already in place, for older persons to lodge complaints and seek redress for denial of their right to participate in and contribute to sustainable development?

The German constitution (Basic Law) guarantees the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for everyone. Everyone has access to justice, cf. answers to the respective questionnaires for the OEWGA's 11th and 12th session regarding the topic of access to justice. Furthermore the Federal Antidiscrimination Agency (<https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/EN/homepage/homepage-node.html;jsessionid=152CA57E64BE3FE0FBCB6AF8985BDCCE.intranet221>) provides confidential counselling free of charge. It can also help in finding a counselling centre close to where persons seeking aid live. However, the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) in Germany offers protection from discrimination in working life as well as in the field of goods and services, but does not apply to, for instance, voluntary work.