

**UNECE Input to the Fourteenth Session of the
United Nations General Assembly Open-ended Working Group on Ageing**

Focus area 1: Accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access)

UNECE member States committed in the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration¹ to the goal of “promoting active and healthy ageing throughout life”. To achieve this goal, it is essential to making all environments, including physical, social, technological, and digital environments, more age-friendly and accessible for all, and increasing the availability of adapted housing and assistive devices. In the Rome Ministerial Declaration UNECE member States also recognized the intersectionality between disability and ageing across different areas of everyday life, and addressing obstacles older persons with disabilities face, including by promoting universal design and adaptations as a prerequisite for age-friendly environments.

Based on these premises, UNECE member States committed to:

- invest in the creation of more age-friendly environments by implementing innovative housing solutions, smart urban and rural planning, appropriate recreational infrastructure, and accessible public transport and mobility services,
- strengthen the autonomy and independence of older persons, enabling them to age safely in a place of their choice, while recognizing the value of the intergenerational approach to improve the lives of people of all ages, in line with WHO guidance on age-friendly environments.

Policy progress in the UNECE region relevant to the focus area “accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access)” – fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action and its Regional Implementation Strategy in 2022

The regional synthesis report² based on [40 national reports](#) submitted for the fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and its Regional Implementation Strategy in the UNECE region provides information on progress relevant to the focus area of age-friendly environments during the period 2018 to 2022 on pages 19 – 20 of the report. It also lists many specific policy examples aimed at guaranteeing older persons

¹ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Rome_Ministerial_Declaration.pdf

² https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/Synthesis-report_0.pdf

rights concerning transport, housing and access which are described in more detail in the national reports submitted by UNECE member States.³ As highlighted in the synthesis report, the recognition that enabling environments are key for realising the potential of increased longevity has been on the rise in the region.

Specific efforts to enhance the accessibility of physical and digital environments were reported by a significant number of UNECE member States, and several countries adopted comprehensive policy frameworks to ensure that accessibility is systematically taken into consideration in the design, procurement and realisation of products and services. For example, increased accessibility of physical environments has been the cornerstone of Norway's ageing strategy which includes a dedicated programme to set up a national network of age-friendly communities which, among others, will provide older persons with training and guidelines on participation in local planning and decision-making.

Regarding housing the synthesis report highlights several specific measures by UNECE member States that provide financial support for home adaptations and/or for the construction of new housing units adapted to the needs of older persons. For example, in Germany, as part of the «age-appropriate conversion» programme, funds have been allocated not only to eliminate barriers in residential buildings, but also to create community spaces and make structural anti-burglary alterations. In Ireland, in the context of national policy frameworks to support age-friendly housing for older persons and with the support of Age-Friendly Ireland, many new housing developments now respond adequately to the needs of older persons.⁴

At the same time, as highlighted in the synthesis report, several UNECE member States reported progress towards barrier-free and accessible public transportation options, for instance, by subsidising public transport for older persons. For example, in Malta a Silver T service is in operation, a free transport service for older adults to enable them to run errands within the community they live in. In Poland, the “Accessibility Plus” 2018-2025 government programme aims to improve accessibility of public spaces and transport in the country, specifically also for older persons. A related government act defines clear obligations of public entities in terms of architectural, information and communication and digital accessibility for citizens of all ages.

³ <https://unece.org/mipaa20-country-reports>

⁴ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/Presentation_2_Anne_Rizzo_Colivet%20Court%20Housing%20Mar.%202023.pdf

Focus area 2: Participation in public life and in decision-making processes

UNECE member States committed in the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration to facilitate older persons' participation in public life and to involve older persons in a meaningful way in policymaking processes at all levels. UNECE member States acknowledged the ongoing challenge to enhance the involvement of older persons and their representatives in law- and policymaking at all levels to better reflect their rights and diverse needs and interests. To address this challenge, UNECE member States committed to:

- involving older persons and their organizations in a constructive and meaningful way in the law and policymaking processes at all levels to ensure that their rights, needs, and interests are taken into account in policies, programmes, and laws that affect them;
- developing a participatory stakeholder engagement approach in a whole-of-government and whole-of-society effort to ensure that older persons and organizations that represent them are listened to and actively involved in meaningful cross-sectoral dialogue and collaboration on ageing between all relevant actors in the public and private sector, academia, social partners, and civil society;
- facilitating older persons' participation in social, cultural, and civic life, and promoting lifelong learning;
- promoting a positive culture and image of ageing by making the diversity among older persons an asset and by highlighting the manifold contributions of older persons to society;
- protecting older persons against ageism and all forms of discrimination in all areas by adopting or strengthening the implementation of laws and other instruments at the local, national, or international level, by modifying existing instruments based on discriminatory or stereotypical attitudes or practices, by establishing educational and awareness-raising programmes and campaigns, and fostering intergenerational activities, dialogue, and support;
- strengthening the protection of older persons' full enjoyment of human rights, including by addressing the challenges underscored by emergency and conflict situations and the COVID-19 pandemic and enhancing international cooperation in this regard.

Policy progress in the UNECE relevant to the focus area of participation in public life and in decision-making processes – fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action and its Regional Implementation Strategy in 2022

The regional synthesis report⁵ based on 40 national reports submitted for the fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action and its Regional Implementation Strategy in the UNECE region provides information on progress relevant to the focus area of participation in public life and in decision-making processes during the period 2018 to 2022 (see page 17). The Statistical Annex provides data on the share of persons aged 55 and older involved in political and civic life (Table A7a on page 69). The national reports provide many specific policy examples aimed at facilitating older persons' participation in public life and in decision-making processes.⁶

As highlighted in the synthesis report, many countries in the UNECE region have set up advisory bodies on ageing and older persons' issues through which older people, their representatives, as well as social partners and experts from related fields are given a voice and a place at the table. Representative and advisory bodies at the local and regional level is particularly common with 19 countries reporting the presence of some form of older persons' council or advisory committee on older persons' issues.

In several countries, legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms have been established obligating the regular and systematic consultation and involvement of older persons in decision-making affecting them. In Cyprus, for example, the Elders' Parliament is made up of 56 "elderly MPs" who actively contribute to the policy-making process related to social welfare and to the health domain. In Denmark, all municipalities are by law required to establish a Senior Citizens Council, elected by citizens above 60 years old in direct election. The Council gives older people formalized access to influence the concerned municipality's ageing policy.

Public consultation has been an additional form of engagement employed in some countries, aiming to obtain knowledge and consult older persons, their representatives and experts on issues related mainly to pensions and care. Some countries have used capacity building and training as tools to empower older persons and their representatives to influence and contribute to decision making on matters affecting them. Fostering a positive image of older persons and ageing is also a means of fighting ageism and stigma which may hinder older persons from realizing their full potential and contributing to society. Various initiatives were undertaken by UNECE member States in this direction, including awareness raising campaigns, competitions, public dialogue, and cultural events.

⁵ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/Synthesis-report_0.pdf

⁶ <https://unece.org/mipaa20-country-reports>

UNECE publications

[Meaningful participation of older persons and civil society in policymaking](#)

[UNECE Policy Brief on Ageing No. 4: Integration and participation of older persons in society](#)

[UNECE Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing](#)

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